

In These Times

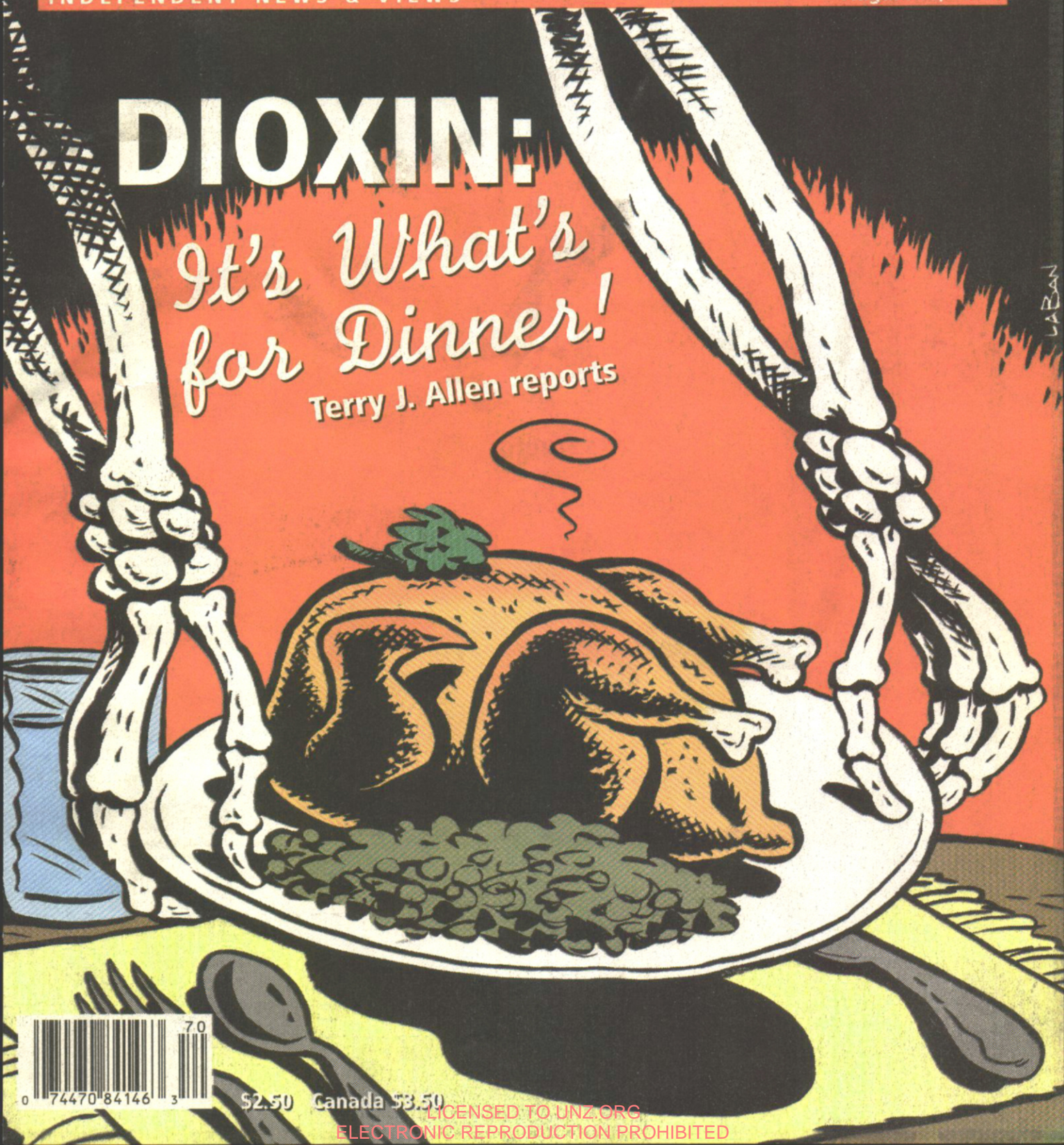
INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

August 22, 1999

DIOXIN:

*It's What's
for Dinner!*

Terry J. Allen reports



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James Weinstein

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New World Order

In the inexorable march toward a globalized economy, much of the world is being left behind. "Global inequalities in income and living standards have reached grotesque proportions," concludes the U.N. Development Program's *Human Development Report 1999* (available at www.undp.org/hdro). The report, the program's tenth annual, chronicles these growing disparities with a wealth of shocking data that underscores what we already knew: Too many of the world's 6 billion people live in grinding poverty that strips them of their potential and shunts them off to an early grave. On average, 32 percent of the people born in 42 of the world's poorest countries will die before they reach 40.

The U.N. report offers the following statistics:

- In 1997, the richest 20 percent of the world's population had an annual income that was 74 times that of the world's poorest 20 percent, up from 30 times as much in 1960.
- The combined wealth of computer wizard Bill Gates (\$90 billion), financier Warren Buffett (\$36 billion) and Wal-Mart heir S. Robson Walton (\$15.8 billion) totaled more than the combined gross national product of the world's 43 least-developed countries, which have 600 million citizens.
- In the past four years, the world's 200 richest people have seen their net worth double to \$1 trillion. Meanwhile, the number of people surviving on less than \$1 a day has remained unchanged at 1.3 billion.

The U.N. Development Program does more than delineate this carnage, it offers some ideas on how to promote the well-being of humans rather than free markets. "None of these pernicious trends—growing marginalization, growing human insecurity, growing inequality—is inevitable," the report says. "With political will and commitment in the global community, they can all be reversed."

Calling for "globalization with a human face," the report recommends that human rights and multilateral economic agreements should apply not just to national governments, but to all global players, including multinational corporations—which influence the lives of billions but are answerable only to their shareholders. One solution: Subject these giant conglomerates to "global governance" so that their policy positions become open to greater public accountability.

Some corporations, such as Mattel and Disney, have begun taking their social responsibility more seriously after public exposure. Yet, the report acknowledges, "multinational corporations are too important and too dominant a part of the global economy for voluntary codes to be enough." Therefore, they should be made subject to codes of conduct administered by the World Trade

Organization that would ensure corporations respect labor standards and human rights, operate in an environmentally sustainable manner, and engage in practices that foster fair trade and competitive markets.

The report also recommends that the mandate of the WTO be expanded to include a "world anti-monopoly authority to monitor and implement competition rules for the global market." (The world's top 10 telecommunications corporations control 86 percent of the \$262 billion world market.) Furthermore, it advises that banks and financial institutions be regulated by codes that would overturn banking-secrecy provisions in national laws, which allow corrupt officials, tax-evading executives and mobsters to hide their ill-gotten gains.

To meet these and other challenges, new and improved institutions need to be built—what the report calls "the global architecture for the 21st century"—where bodies like the World Bank and the WTO would be more coherent and democratic. It calls for the creation of a global central bank and lender of last resort, a world environment agency, and a world investment trust with redistributive functions. The current mandate of the International Criminal Court, which covers war crimes, could be improved by including violations of human rights. And the U.N. system could be expanded to include a two-chamber General Assembly that would permit representation of NGOs.

Too many of the world's 6 billion people live in grinding poverty that strips them of their potential and shunts them off to an early grave.

Good ideas. But how do we get from here to there?

In his contribution to the report, CNN founder and U.N. funder Ted Turner observes, "Globalization is in fast forward, and the world's ability to understand and react to it is in slow motion." Part of that lack of understanding is because there has been little public discussion of the problems posed by globalization. The commercial press remains unwilling to question the sanctity of the free market system that is at the root of the problem. Nor does it acknowledge that there are ways to redistribute the wealth from folks like Gates, Buffett and Walton to those in need—without crimping billionaire lifestyles.

The U.N. *Human Development Report* provides an overview of the challenges that face our world and supplies detailed solutions that would steer us in the right direction. Utopian? Perhaps. But some vision is better than none. The report puts it this way: "On the eve of the millennium, people are unusually expectant of a more fundamental diagnosis, more ready to receive it, more eager to act on it."

Joel Bleifuss

Letters

Queer Politics To Go

I want to thank the editors and contributors of *In These Times* for the collection of essays on gay and lesbian politics, such as they are ("Pride and Politics," June 27). For the past decade, many radical queers have noticed an alarming shift in the political perspective and judgment of gay and lesbian organizations acting upon our behalf. As your learned contributors point out, the symbiosis of corporate dollars and gay community-building contradicts the broad social justice and grassroots nature of the movement (predating the '60s and beyond The Castro). I applaud them for boldly standing up and offering needed criticism of the dubious acquiescence (and outright partnering) of gay and lesbian liberty to corporate abusers and regressive ideology.

I will use this issue of *In These Times* as a resource for how queer politics should be heading in the new millennium.

Mick Schommer
Pride Without Borders
Minneapolis

Fascist Foolery

Where is Joel Bleifuss coming from? Belgrade?

The new *In These Times* editor has indeed set a different tone from his predecessor: spin-doctor for a fascist dictator. In his June 27 editorial ("Truth, the First Casualty"), Bleifuss joins forces with the right in this country by giving an appalling spin to events in Kosovo, in which NATO is the evildoer and the indicted war criminal,

Slobodan Milosevic, is not criticized at all. Though Bleifuss acknowledges Serb forces and paramilitaries have committed atrocities, he goes on to imply that their actions were not all black and white because some young Muslim men remained in Kosovo.

Yes, Joel, and some young Jews remained in the Warsaw Ghetto during the Nazi reign of terror. Did that show that the Nazi atrocities were exaggerated?

Bill Bianchi
Chicago

Gangsta Rap

In his letter in the July 11 issue, Jeff Sharlet supposes that my description of the Kosovo Liberation Army as "scarcely the sort of outfit one might expect to see" at the Rambouillet negotiations implies that "only well-dressed bureaucrats are fit to negotiate," which "hardly seems like a position of the left." This seems to reflect the notion on Sharlet's part that the KLA is a sort of third world guerrilla movement. In fact, the KLA leaders are impeccably dressed—when on duty, in German army uniforms—and typically drive around Kosovo in Mercedes or BMWs with Swiss license plates.

The KLA are well-dressed, as can be expected of a bunch of gangsters—which was the real meaning of my remark. The KLA is notoriously linked to the ethnic Albanian gangs who, according to countless police and media reports, control the heroin trade through the Balkans into Western Europe.

The startling rise of the KLA is due very precisely to U.S. support. It was thanks to open backing from special envoy Richard Holbrooke and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright that the KLA was able to take over leadership of the ethnic Albanian delegation at Rambouillet, shoving aside the older generation of nationalist leaders headed by Ibrahim Rugova, in what was described by some of the Albanians themselves as a sort of "putsch."

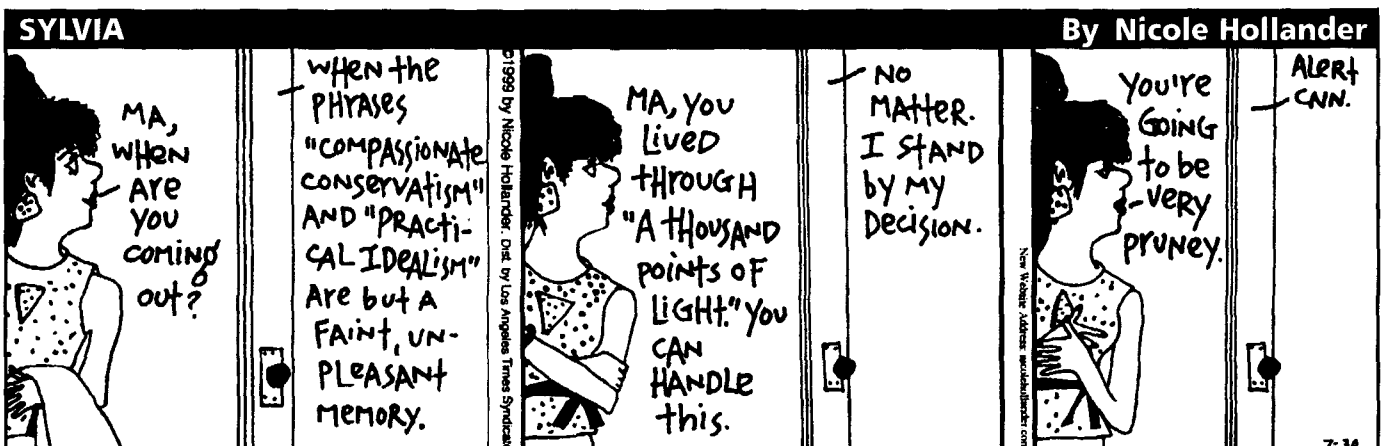
The reason for this is that the U.S. leaders wanted to bomb, whereas leaders like Rugova would have been ready to accept an available negotiated settlement to avoid war. The Serbian government and ethnic Albanian delegates were not even allowed to meet each other at Rambouillet. The United States gave preference to criminal elements apparently in order to have foot soldiers for the Pentagon's "no casualty" air war.

As to the questions I supposedly have left "unanswered," readers may look for the reader on the war to be published later this year by Verso, with articles by a number of contributors.

Diana Johnstone
Paris

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Good Friday Goes Bad

By Kelly Candaele

BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND

David Trimble, first minister of the Northern Irish Assembly and Ulster Unionist Party leader, has looked the possibility of long-term peace in the face and blinked, pushing the tenuous peace process in Northern Ireland to the brink of collapse.

During negotiations on July 14, Trimble announced that his party would not change its position on decommissioning of paramilitary weapons, a demand for the surrender of arms prior to the establishment of a devolved government in Northern Ireland. On the day the Northern Irish Assembly was scheduled to nominate members to an inclusive executive cabinet that would run the day-to-day affairs of government—a critical component of the Good Friday Agreement—the potential government fell to shambles. The Ulster Unionists didn't bother showing up for the meeting, leaving the nationalist parties to talk among themselves.

Trimble's announcement turned what was supposed to be the crowning moment of the peace process into a tragic farce. What has happened in Northern Ireland over the past five years is nothing short of miraculous. An IRA cease-fire has been sustained for more than two years. Peace negotiations resulted in a deal that both Protestants and Catholics accepted. Referenda on the agreement held last May in both Northern Ireland and the Republic passed overwhelmingly; and a year ago vigorous democratic elections were held for the Northern Irish Assembly, a precursor to governmental devolution.

All of this potentially has been lost over the issue of decommissioning.

Unionists have insisted that actual arms be surrendered before the executive is formed, while Sinn Fein has said that inclusive political bodies must be formed first. After Trimble's announcement, Martin McGuinness, Sinn Fein's chief negotiator, stated, "The peace process has been turned into a decommissioning process, avoiding the issue of conflict resolution."

Trimble's move came after weeks of futile negotiations, which failed to wring further concessions from Sinn Fein. Trimble said he was "not going to gamble" on the future of democratic government or his political leadership without further guarantees of

strategy that could prove disastrous.

Toward the end of negotiations, Adams said his constituency had been "stretched" after accepting several elements of the agreement that were clearly anathema to Sinn Fein's core membership. Sinn Fein agreed to participate in a Northern Irish government, implicitly accepting the legitimacy of the state, a reality that would have been considered unthinkable a few short years ago. Sinn Fein also accepted that Ireland would alter its constitutional and historical claims to Northern Ireland. And during the negotiations, Adams announced, "All of us, as participants in good faith, could succeed in persuading those with guns to decommission them." For the first time, Sinn Fein essentially was announcing that IRA arms would be surrendered in accordance with the May 2000 deadline for decommissioning.

Trimble failed to respond in kind, surrendering to an implacable core of Northern Irish unionism which still has not accepted that genuine power sharing with the nationalist community is the only way forward. And Trimble did not accomplish what Adams has been so adept at, bringing both his party and broader constituency forward to face the new realities of Northern Ireland.

The British are attempting to put a positive spin on what is clearly a major setback.

A review of the situation will take place over the summer, as required by the Good Friday Agreement. In the meantime, extremist groups on both sides are preparing to plunge Northern Ireland back into full-scale war. As a young man from Belfast said the day after the debacle, "Get prepared to duck." ■

Kelly Candaele writes frequently on Northern Ireland for a number of national publications.



Is war returning to Northern Ireland?

IRA decommissioning. Specifically, Trimble warned that if decommissioning did not take place immediately after the executive committee was in place, the Northern Irish Assembly would exclude Sinn Fein.

Trimble's position is a clear violation of the Good Friday Agreement—designed to shore up his shaky standing in a divided party and, in former Deputy First Minister Seamus Mallon's words, to "bleed more concessions" out of the British and Irish governments. It's a

McUnion Busting

By Fred Weir

Moscow

When McDonald's established its brand of hamburger civilization in the former Soviet Union, the company brought along roughneck union-busting tactics as well.

"McDonald's is wrecking its good image in Russia and violating Russian law," says Kiril Buketov, who represents the Geneva-based International Union of Food and Allied Workers in Russia. Buketov works closely with a group of workers who have been trying since November to organize a trade union local in the McDonald's food processing plant in Solntsevo, an industrial center just beyond the Moscow city limits. Union officials say McDonald's violated Russian law by failing to recognize the union and declaring that joining it would mean loss of privileges, pay cuts and possible firing. Under this pressure, most of the plant's 450 employees were persuaded to sign anti-union declarations.

"Russian law stipulates that three or more people in any enterprise can form a union, and the company must recognize it and open negotiations with it," Buketov says. "These people tried to exercise their rights, and found themselves subjected to intimidation, hounding and stonewalling. The company has created an absolutely hostile working environment and terrible relations between workers and management."

The as-yet unrecognized union local is led by Natalia Gracheva, a 38-year-old systems controller who has worked at the McDonald's plant since it started up nine years ago. Gracheva says that she and several others decided something had to be done after the Russian financial crisis and ruble devaluation last August. McDonald's cut staff and the remaining employees saw their real wages plunge by as much as 70 percent. Employees were forced to sign new contracts, which went into effect in June, lowering their guaranteed work week from 40 to 20 hours. "Managers' salaries are indexed to the U.S. dollar, so they didn't feel the impact of ruble devalua-

tion," Gracheva says. "But it was very painful and difficult for the workers."

McDonald's opened its first restaurant in the former Soviet Union in 1990 on Moscow's Pushkin Square. It now runs 47 outlets, mostly around Moscow, and employs almost 7,000 Russians. Gracheva says it was a good company to work for in the early years, paying salaries above Russian standards and providing several benefits, such as free meals, work clothes and special events for children.

But conditions have worsened dramatically.

The starting wage for a new employee at McDonald's is now just 33 cents per hour. At that rate, it takes a worker three hours to earn enough for a Big Mac. "Maybe when it started in the last days of the Soviet Union McDonald's looked good," Buketov says.

"But compared to other foreign ventures that have started up in the food industry over the past several years, McDonald's wages are low, its health and safety record is poor and the level of workers' rights is atrocious."

Gracheva says that when she and 15 or so other workers started organizing at the plant last November, McDonald's launched a ruthless campaign to break them. Company tactics included harassing known union members by constantly changing their shifts, meting out discipline for even the smallest infractions—such as overstaying a toilet break by a single minute—and denying bonuses routinely paid to all employees.

One union member who has endured

constant pressure is Yevgeny Druzhinin, a driver at the Solntsevo plant for the past eight years. "Even to visit the bathroom you have to ask permission," he says. "They invent ridiculous norms, like one-and-a-half minutes to load or unload something. And if you take too long, the managers write that you work badly. It's like penal servitude."

McDonald's sole public comment on the issue is a statement faxed to journalists that acknowledges the right of a small group of workers to unionize under Russian law. But it says that "more than 400 Russians are employed at McDonald's food processing and distribution center and we are proud to say that the majority of these employ-



ALEXANDER NATRUSKIN/REUTERS

Ronald is no clown to Russian workers.

ees support the current employment practices. As always, we respect the wishes of our employees and continue to abide by local labor laws."

Gracheva says McDonald's has eased up on efforts to pressure the dozen or so remaining union members, but has yet to respond to a collective bargaining proposal filed by the union in February. Russian labor legislation stipulates that negotiations between company and union must begin within a week of the proposal being made. "Maybe it's naive of me to think that McDonald's should be decent and civilized about this because they're a foreign company," Gracheva says. "But I believe that if you know your rights and follow all the rules, things should work out." ■

Welcome to the Jungle

By Jane Slaughter

Strike-bound management officials at IBP, the world's largest processor of beef and pork, were right about one thing in turning down a *New York Times* reporter's request for a plant tour. "People like to visualize the cow out in the pasture and the steak on the plate," company spokesman Don Willoughby says. "But they really don't want to visualize what goes on in between."

What goes on in between sent a thousand immigrant meatpacking workers in Wallula, Wash., members of Teamsters Local 556, into the streets on June 4. The wildcat strike was touched off when an IBP (formerly Iowa Beef Processing) superintendent fired a dozen workers protesting a work speed-up. Line speeds in the plant, workers say, leave them cut and crippled—and raise questions about the desirability of the steak on the plate as well.

The strike was remarkable in many respects: The workers involved were almost all immigrants, mostly Mexican, as well as Central American, Vietnamese, Bosnian and Laotian, and a majority are women. They showed a tenacity, solidarity and tactical inventiveness that brought

them national news coverage. But in the end, the Wallula strikers shared the fate of many other American workers over the past few decades: They were sold out by union officials.

Meatpacking is the industry with the highest rate of repeated trauma disorders and lost work days due to injury and illness. Unsafe conditions also lead to hazards for consumers, says chief steward Maria Martinez. "The working conditions are so bad due to the speed of the chain," she says, speaking of the processing department where workers cut carcasses into salable units. "They get carpal tunnel, they pull their backs, they pull muscles on their shoulders. The line is so fast you can't keep up, you stack your meat and if it falls on the floor, you don't have time to wash it."

One of the main causes of injury is falling on floors made slippery by fat and blood. "If you fall on your butt you mess up your tailbone," Martinez says. "We have two men in wheelchairs now. The worst part is, once you're hurt they'll find a way to get you out the door."

In 1996, the last year for which numbers are available, the Wallula plant

was cited for enough violations of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) food safety rules to place it in the worst 5 percent of all meat and poultry plants. One hundred seventy-six violations were "critical"—of the type likely to cause contamination that would make consumers sick. Of the 544 largest plants, Wallula was in the worst quarter. Last November, USDA inspectors issued a warning about recurring sanitation problems.

A frequent worker complaint, according to line steward Melquiades "Flaco" Pereyra, is lack of time to deal properly with abscesses in the meat. When a worker cuts into a hidden abscess, pus squirts everywhere, and there's no time to do more than wipe your face or the meat with a paper towel.

The factory is the largest in a multi-plant Teamsters local long run by old-guard white officials. In 1997, workers began organizing to oust their appointed do-nothing chief steward and to change the local's bylaws to allow shop floor reps to be elected. Hundreds of members voted unanimously for the change, then elected the fiery Martinez in a landslide.

Martinez and the other members of the informal committee that ran the strike are all members of the union reform movement Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU). In last fall's election for the union's international president, the IBP workers voted nearly 10-to-1 against the winner, James P. Hoffa.

Although workers were far better organized on the shop floor than before, the local—and bargaining authority—were still in the hands of the old officials. Throughout the strike, the committee had to work around the active opposition of local and international Teamsters officials. They organized a march of 2,000 workers through the streets of town, demonstrated at USDA headquarters and held a "mass Mass" on the picket line.

Midway through the strike, workers overwhelmingly voted down the company's "last, best and final offer," which included a pay raise of \$1.57 an hour—although union officials permitted a few hundred workers who had crossed picket lines to vote. Management bused these scabs from the plant to the union hall, where officials allowed them to

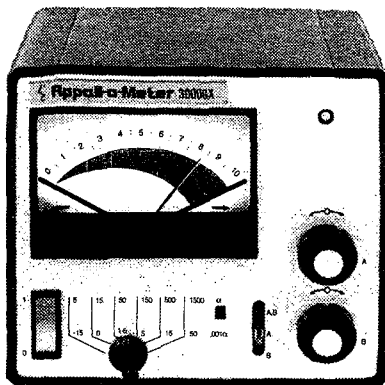
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Terry LaBan



Appall-o-Meter

By David Futrelle



Strictly Ballroom 6.4

You can dance if you want to. At least now that a federal judge has ruled that attempts by the town fathers of Pound, Va., to outlaw dancing is unconstitutional. The law, passed in 1981, was an attempt to discourage drinking and other sorts of vice emanating from dance halls. U.S. District Judge Glen Williams, noting that the case "was more than slightly reminiscent" of the 1984 movie *Footloose*, declared the law was just a tad too harsh. If the town really wanted to wipe out vice, he wrote, "it is clear to this court that the Town Council could craft a

more narrow ordinance aimed at controlling the perceived evils associated with dancing."

What's in a Name? 7.5

If you make a stop at Six Flags Elitch Gardens during your next vacation in Colorado, watch out for the Mind Eraser roller coaster—it just might live up to its name. The park is being sued by a woman who claims she now suffers from amnesia and other memory problems as a result of head injuries suffered on the ride in 1997, the *Rocky Mountain News* reports. Park officials say that the ride is perfectly safe; they can't remember getting more than a handful of complaints. "The percentage of people that claim to have injured themselves is so small compared to the 2.5 million people that have ridden the ride and enjoyed it," a park spokeswoman told the press.

Bing Trouble 5.3

Swing music has caught on with a certain stratum of alienated aging hipsters. How about Bing? Well, there doesn't seem to be much

chance the late crooner will enjoy a big comeback with the kids. According to Sydney, Australia's *Daily Telegraph*, one local shopping mall has found the perfect solution to its problems with unruly loitering teenagers: blasting Bing Crosby's "My Heart is Taking Lessons" over the loudspeakers, over and over again, and lighting the place with pink fluorescent lights said to highlight pimples and other adolescent skin troubles. "All the people from Warrawong High used to hang here after school," one 14-year-old told the paper. "Now you don't see them."



TERRY LABAN

Continued from page 5
rejoin the union they had just quit, waiving the re-initiation fee.

"They didn't do one thing against the company," Pereyra says of Teamsters officials. "[The negotiator] came and walked the picket line a couple of hours and left. That was all the pressure he put on the company." Officials hired as "strike coordinator" the owner of a local Spanish-language newspaper, David Cortinas, who met with small groups of members to try to turn them against the strike. His newspaper even ran an ad from IBP recruiting scabs.

Four weeks into the strike, at a meeting of 500 Teamsters officials in Las Vegas, International Vice President Jon Rabine reported on developments in the region

and made no mention of the struggle at IBP, the union's largest ongoing strike. A few days later, Rabine took over bargaining and brought back an offer without consulting with the strike committee. It raised wages by \$1.07 an hour over five



Strikers demanded safety and higher pay.

meeting at which Rabine allowed little discussion. The committee's recommendation to go back to work without a

contract and continue the fight inside the plant was ruled out of order.

Strikers went back to work on July 9, vowing to run for local offices in the fall. Three days later, Hoffa tossed the local into trusteeship. The IBP workers expect him to merge Local 556 with another in order to dilute their strength and keep the local—and its \$60,000-a-year top job—in his allies' hands.

The IBP workers look at their strike as a learning experience. "We made the world realize how this company was treating the workers and the public," Pereyra says. "Because our strike wasn't just for money, but to protect the workers and to protect the public, the consumer."

"We built a good relationship with some of the Bosnians, some of the Laotians, some of the Vietnamese," Martinez adds. "That's our next step, to see if we can get some stewards of other races. We knew the way the strike ended wasn't because of us. We were strong enough to carry it on." ■

Jane Slaughter is a labor writer in Detroit.

Air War

By A. Clay Thompson

BERKELEY, CALIF.

An e-mail message sparked the largest, most sustained protests this city has seen in nearly a decade. The note detailed apparent plans by directors of the Pacifica Radio Foundation to sell KPFA-FM, the network's 60,000-watt flagship station. And Berkeley, home to the left media beacon for the past 50 years, is not amused. "I felt like I had no choice but to get arrested," says 20-year listener Diana Gwinn, one of nearly 100 people jailed in the week after the e-mail hit. "This is the last bastion of free speech on the airwaves."

Demonstrators say the fate of progressive radio in this country hangs on the battle now being waged in the streets. Bad blood between KPFA staffers and supporters and parent company Pacifica, the nation's premier alt-radio network, has been brewing for the past five years. The network, which operates on a \$9 million annual budget, owns KPFA and four other outlets—Houston's KPFT, Los Angeles' KPFF, Washington's WPFW and New York's WBAI—and beams programming to 67 affiliate stations. Recently Pacifica has been plagued by internal fights over plans to gain a larger slice of the Arbitron pie by revamping programming. Backers of the changes say they'll bring in a larger, more diverse listenership. Opponents characterize the reformatting as "corporatization" and "NPR-ization."

The feud began in earnest in March, when Pacifica refused to renew the contract of the station's popular general manager, Nicole Sawaya. KPFA employees claim she was asking embarrassing questions about how network executives were handling finances. Pacifica only has said the manager was "not a good fit." In

the months since, Pacifica has canned 30-year veteran and award-winning journalist Larry Bensky and another host, Robbie Osman, for complaining on-air about Sawaya's termination.

The firings prompted an outpouring of criticism from listeners and progressive leaders. On June 14, activists staged a sit-in at Pacifica offices; the network had them arrested and charged with trespassing. Board chairwoman Mary Frances Berry—a Clinton appointee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights—

valued at as much as \$100 million each. Pacifica spokeswoman Elan Fabbri confirmed the authenticity of the e-mail, but denied any plans to sell or drastically revamp the stations.

When Media Alliance held a press conference on July 13 revealing the errant e-mail, veteran KPFA reporter Dennis Bernstein covered the event and replayed it on his regular evening show. The network, founded on the pacifist ideals of conscientious objector Lewis Hill, responded by sending in armed guards to physically drag Bernstein from the station, cutting the news program in mid-sentence. Hearing Bernstein's screams—and then silence—some 400 listeners and programmers rushed to the station and staged a peaceful sit-in.

Police arrested 52 people. The network then quickly locked-out all employees and began airing 100 percent canned content.

By morning, KPFA was boarded up and engulfed in a constant wave of protest. Bernstein and other employees charge Pacifica's top brass with mounting an ultrahostile takeover. Pacifica told Bay Area dailies it hasn't locked out staff, but rather placed them on "administrative leave."

Pacifica's police state.

Condemnation of Pacifica has been overwhelming. Sixteen state legislators are calling for hearings to investigate possible unethical or illegal actions. Progressive figures ranging from Alice Walker to Michael Parenti have spoken out at the rallies. The mainstream press is dogging the foundation on a daily basis. FAIR is calling for the entire governing board to resign. "It's mind-boggling," says KPFA news co-director Aileen Alfandary. "I just can't imagine what they're doing. They're being repudiated from coast to coast. They'll never be able to raise another cent here in Northern California." ■

The e-mail that set off all the ruckus in Berkeley was supposed to have gone from Pacifica board member Micheal Palmer to Berry, but somehow it ended up in the in-box of Media Alliance, a Bay Area media workers' organization. "I was under the impression there was support in the proper quarters, and a definite majority, for shutting down that unit and re-programming immediately," reads Palmer's message, which goes on to detail plans to also sell New York's WBAI. Licenses for both KPFA and WBAI—located in prime markets on the commercial end of the dial—are



RORY MCNAMARA/S.F. BAY GUARDIAN

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Star-Spangled Banter

Among the various horrors and injustices requiring your immediate attention, the proposal to amend the Constitution to forbid the "desecration" of American flags probably ranks at about half-mast or lower.

The House just passed the amendment and the Senate may well follow suit, but no one except a handful of libertarians is screaming about this threat to our freedom of speech. After all, there can't be that many Americans who can think of no other way of expressing themselves other than by torching Old Glory. And exactly what kind of statement would they be trying to make anyway? The Citizen's Flag Alliance lists just three acts of flag desecration in 1999, and no one has any idea what the perpetrators were trying to tell us, with the exception of John Edward Reeves, 41, of Jacksonville, Fla., who cut a hole in a flag, pulled it over his head and wore it as a dress—and his was clearly a *fashion* statement.

But even if you never have desecrated a flag and have no plans to do so in the future, there are still some excellent reasons to protest the coming prohibition. First, the amendment is menacingly vague, and I'm not referring to the word "desecrate," which no doubt has been adequately defined by some pontiff or ayatollah somewhere. I'm referring to the word "flag." Can you be sure that you've never desecrated one of these things? Would you even know one when you saw one?

In the wave of pop patriotism that began with the Gulf War or possibly the Iran hostage crisis, flags or flag-like objects have been mutating and reproducing uncontrollably. Among them: flag baseball caps, T-shirts, postage stamps, boxer shorts, cookie cutters, doormats, toothpicks, bathing suits, bandannas and citronella candles. The possibilities for inadvertent acts of desecration are endless: Sweating into a flag bandanna, for example, or suffering a momentary lapse of continence while wearing flag boxer shorts, may someday constitute serious misdemeanors.

No way, you say, the above-mentioned objects are only symbols of flags rather than actual flags. But here we are wading into ontologically deep water, for a flag itself is a symbol, so a symbol of a flag, it could be argued, is also a symbol of whatever the flag is a symbol



of. The cross on your local church, for example, is only a symbol of the actual cross employed in the execution of Jesus, but this does not make it any less a symbol of mercy and salvation (or of crusades and pogroms and inquisitions, depending on your point of view.) A case could be made that the person who leaves a tiny stain in his flag boxer shorts is dishonoring our troops, our veterans and our entire way of life.

And where a case can be made, it usually will be. The trouble with vague laws is that they tend to be differentially enforced. If flag desecration is outlawed, white suburbanites will no doubt continue to eat flag cakes on the Fourth of July and clean their teeth with flag toothpicks afterward. But black motorists should expect to be pulled over and searched for carelessly folded flag bandannas and rusty flag lapel pins.

There is another problem with flag-desecration prohibition, one which you'd think would arouse a little indignation on the political right: Banning flag desecration would be a clear violation of property rights. No one is going to stop you from purchasing any other object—a crucifix, a portrait of our president and first lady, a microwave oven—and sub-

jecting it to hideous and obscene defilements in the privacy of your home. The exception is any living creature larger than a goldfish and more lovable than a ferret, which cannot be purchased for the purpose of torture. So if flag desecration is outlawed, there will be only two choices: Either the sale of flags will be banned, leaving patriots to score their Memorial Day paraphernalia illegally in seedy neighborhoods, or flags will be legally designated as pets—with their care and treatment monitored, house-to-house, by the flag equivalent of the ASPCA.

Finally, an anti-flag desecration amendment would violate the part of the First Amendment that forbids Congress from establishing a state religion. Nothing can be "desecrated" unless it has already been "secrated," so the amendment would amount to the establishment of flag worship (uh, better make that "Flag worship") as our official religion. Judeo-Christians of all denomina-

He who leaves a stain in his flag boxer shorts could be dishonoring our troops and veterans.

tions should be up in arms about this, since their deity explicitly forbids the worship of idols and graven images—meaning not only golden calves, but also American flags. And even if you have no objection to a state religion, couldn't we at least have one with a little more supernatural heft? To date, not a single person has been raised from the dead or cured of back pain by contact with a flag or flag-like object.

So please take the time to write your senators about why you oppose the flag-desecration amendment. Just be careful not to use a flag postage stamp on the envelope, since it has not been determined yet whether licking one of these constitutes a crime. ■

Seoul Searching

South Korean workers struggle for a say in the economy

By David Moberg

Seoul, South Korea

Strolling down Seoul's broad avenues, it is hard to see signs of the deepest economic crisis to hit Korea since its dramatic take-off to first-world prosperity started four decades ago. Markets are bustling; there are fewer homeless than in any booming American city. Headlines tout a soaring stock market and economic recovery.

Conversations with average Koreans tell a different story: deep shame or even suicide after a job loss, the failure of a family business, difficulties of college graduates seeking jobs, family tensions as the unemployed moved in with relatives—and resentment toward both the owners of the giant conglomerates, or *chaebol*, and many politicians, who appear to be sharing little of the country's pain.

The primary culprit in public consciousness remains the International Monetary Fund. As a condition of its \$57 billion December 1997 bailout, the IMF insisted on government austerity and high interest rates, even though Korea's problem was not government profligacy but the inability of heavily leveraged corporate empires to pay their debts when short-term foreign speculators fled the Korean market. That sent the economy into deep recession. As output shrank by 6 percent last year, unemployment more than tripled to 8.5 percent and real wages dropped by more than 15 percent.

Because the crisis hit just before the presidential election of Kim Dae Jung, a symbol of democratic resistance to decades of military and authoritarian rule, it has called into question both Korea's model of economic success and its still-shaky transition to democracy. The larger drama is still unfolding on two fronts—protecting jobs and reforming the *chaebol*. While the policy tussle takes a distinctly Korean form, there's also a broader issue: In the new global economy, what choices can countries make about national economic strategy?

Although the fortunes of the export-oriented *chaebol* are turning around, prospects for smaller, domestically oriented businesses remain bleak, and the lives of Korean workers are still quite precarious. For most the primary concern is unemployment, which unions estimate at more than double the official rate. It has inflicted a deep trauma in a country accustomed to 2 percent unemployment, 7 percent annual growth and rapidly rising wages. Although the government has been strengthening its relatively new and very modest safety net, most laid-off workers have fallen back on their families or savings for support. So far, the largely non-union

workers at smaller businesses, especially women, have suffered most, as high interest rates and a severe credit crunch pushed the firms into bankruptcy. Workers with jobs have been squeezed as well. Wages and benefits, including future pensions, have been cut for many full-time workers, who often are forced to work long overtime hours without pay. A growing share, now about half the work force, have only temporary jobs. Despite the corporate uptick, unemployment may rise even further, since the government plans to slash employment in public enterprises, like mass transit, and to pressure the *chaebol* to consolidate enterprises and cut more jobs.

The government hopes that displaced workers will save themselves and the national economy through their entrepreneurship. But those hopes are belied by the all too typical experience of Kwon Oh Tak. Kwon, 35, lost his job at a small printing firm that collapsed in a chain of bankruptcies in April 1998. He worked as a freelancer until December, when business dried up, and since has looked unsuccessfully for jobs while exhausting his retirement savings. "I don't feel the effect yet of the recovery trickling down to the bottom," he says, gripping his cellular phone as he waits for help at a new union office for the unemployed. "The government should create more jobs. The government talks about encouraging the opening up of small business, but I tried and it didn't work. There were difficulties, like getting loans from the banks, which care only about the higher level businesses."

Beyond the hardship for workers, a high-stakes debate continues about the future of both the economy and politics in Korea, one of the few poor countries to have joined the club of rich nations in the past half century. The discussion centers on the thorny issue of *chaebol* reform. *Chaebol* are conglomerates of widely diversified companies locked together by intricate webs of cross-subsidies and cross-ownership that lead back to control by a single family. For many years, the government guided and deeply subsidized the *chaebol* (at the expense of both workers and small savers) to become national economic champions, producing the ships, steel, machine tools, cars, electronics equipment and other exports that powered Korea's ascent. They expanded aggressively, typically by borrowing cheaply at government-influenced banks and carrying debt loads more than triple the American corporate average. Now, the top 30 *chaebol* produce half of Korea's total output (with only four—Hyundai, Samsung, Daewoo and LG—producing more than 30 percent). As the

chaebol grew, the banks and even the government seemed to have little knowledge about or influence over where the money was going, but hundreds of millions of dollars were pumped back into the pockets of Korea's military and political rulers. When the Korean government relaxed its financial controls in recent years, the banks and *chaebol* turned increasingly to short-term foreign investors, especially from Japan, who turned skittish as the Asian crisis unfolded and the scale of dubious loans became more evident.

Nobody wants to preserve the old model, but there is no agreement on an alternative. The reforms pushed by the IMF and the U.S. government include reducing debt, more "transparency" of economic relations, less government-directed lending and subsidy, more openness to international capital markets (including foreign ownership), and more "flexibility" for employers to hire and fire. While supporting these measures, President Kim has focused on rationalization of the *chaebol*, trying to put together "big deals" that will consolidate production of automobiles (such as Hyundai taking over Kia auto operations) or computer chips to reduce excess capacity.

So far, the big *chaebol* owners successfully have resisted reform, though they support further financial deregulation and more flexibility in firing workers. Instead of reducing debt, they performed fancy bookkeeping to make themselves look better. There has been some consolidation, but *chaebol* power has grown, and any economic recovery reduces the incentives to trim their empires. Kim could have allied himself with the labor and citizen movements, which want *chaebol* reform, but he was constrained by his conservative parliamentary coalition partner and by a desire to please the IMF and international business. "The crisis gave Kim a mandate to do anything, but he started going the wrong way," says Yoon Young-mo, international secretary of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU). "He was afraid of being seen as a populist, and he had the United States and the IMF in mind."

Shortly after taking power, Kim persuaded the country's two big labor federations—the more moderate Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU) and the militant KCTU—to join employer federations and the government in a tripartite commission to deal with the crisis. It was a bittersweet breakthrough in public recognition of Korea's unions, especially the KCTU, which have struggled against government repression to become Asia's most militant labor movement (though they account for less than 12 percent of the work force). But the KCTU withdrew earlier this year, arguing that the government was delivering too little to labor and simply using the commission to ease layoffs. After an unprecedented April rebellion by its local officials, the FKTU also quit.

The labor movement sees *chaebol* reform as essential to their long-term strategy to democratize Korea and create the

social power to make corporations better serve their employees and society. Yet the populist approach to *chaebol* reform in Korea often resembles a business school case study more than a jeremiad against economic royalism. Labor unions, like more business-oriented reformers, want to end government favoritism to the *chaebol* and more accurate financial information. Citizen groups, with labor support, also have led fights for more shareholder power, outside directors, and financial responsibility of top officials for losses resulting from abuses of power, including insider trading.

President Kim Dae Jung's anti-labor policies and desire to please IMF managing director Michel Camdessus have outraged unions, filling the streets with protesters.



BACKGROUND PHOTO: AFP/CHOO YOUN-KONG; FOREGROUND: REUTERS/YUN SUK-BONG

While some Kim advisers reportedly envision the *chaebol* becoming a looser group of companies, like the Japanese *keiretsu*, KCTU wants to break up the *chaebol* into individual companies run by professional managers. They see "chaebol tyranny" and the impetuous whims of family owners as more of a threat to workers than a typical CEO. Despite the country's strong nationalist tradition, unions and citizen groups surprisingly have no objection to foreign buyers of Korean businesses, as long as they respect labor rights. At the same time, they are

pushing for a mandatory code of conduct for overseas operations of Korean corporations, which have earned a reputation for abusing workers in Asia and Central America.

While the unions have conceded the possible need for layoffs, they adamantly insist that the government and the *chaebol* first reduce work time, which is nearly the highest among industrial countries—about 900 hours a year more than in Western Europe. Although the union claim that a 20 percent cut in work hours with no pay cut would yield 2 million new jobs is probably overstated, its basic strategy makes sense: sharing work and stimulating domestic consumer demand. Yet because unions have focused on protecting the jobs of their comparatively better-off members, they have not generated much public support.

Most importantly, the unions have demanded a greater voice for workers in both setting government policy toward the *chaebol* (for example, strengthening the tripartite commission) and in management of the businesses themselves, either through direct participation, German-style co-determination, employee stock ownership programs with worker voting rights, worker cooperatives or other mechanisms. Labor leaders, especially in the KCTU, also want to change from a system of unions based on individual enterprises to unions that represent all workers in an industry.

As the *chaebol* cling to the privileges inherited from the old developmental model, the Kim administration pushes tentatively toward what one economist called the "Anglo-Saxon global standard." Ironically, Korea's development occurred partly because business could adopt a more long-range orientation toward growth, escaping from the short-term outlook pressed on American business by that global standard model and its focus on short-term profits. The unions draw inspiration from Europe's social democratic model as well as American forms of worker ownership, both of which sustain farsighted strategies and make corporations more accountable to workers. The union drive is part of a broader effort to give working people more power in Korean society, by reforming the easily corrupted and regionally factionalized political system with German-style parliamentary voting and a union-backed progressive party, for example.

The Kim government, which wanted to be known for its human rights advances, has outraged citizen groups with its failure to eliminate old abuses or to propose a truly independent human rights commission. It has pushed anti-labor policies of its predecessor, including measures that would devastate union finances. It also has intensified attacks on unions, jailing more than 200 union activists last year. Disillusionment with Kim has grown, even as former supporters claim his election opened up political space, and the streets of Seoul have been busy this spring with protests by human rights groups and, most of all, unions.

Starting with a subway strike in mid-April, the KCTU has called a rolling series of strikes through varied public and private enterprises. Unions have struck auto and other metalworking firms, hospitals, television networks and other industries. While the government has claimed there was only lukewarm support for the strikes, it also has cracked down hard, arresting many strike leaders. The unions see the strike wave as more coherent and effective this year than a similar offensive a year ago, citing new protections for temporary and

part-time workers won during the hospital strikes.

In a moment of drunken honesty, an official recently confessed that the government instigated a strike last year at the state-run Korean Minting and Security Printing Corporation in order to crush the union and demonstrate its resolve to fight organized labor generally. The ensuing scandal helped push the FKIU to join protests in June, which led to a meeting between leaders from both federations and President Kim. He agreed to release and stop the prosecution of strike leaders, to review labor policies the unions oppose, and to end the long-established practice of handling large-scale labor disputes through a national security task force that includes the police, Korean CIA and prosecutors.

Kim also pledged to promote union involvement in *chaebol* restructuring. While unions have fought against job cuts, they are willing to consider work force reductions if there is serious reform. "We can accept some level of job loss," the KCTU's Yoon says. "But it can only be legitimized if there is a general change in the ownership structure and management of the *chaebol*. If the same people are in charge with monopoly and autocratic control while shedding jobs, that's not acceptable."

This is part of a broader campaign to give working people a greater voice in charting national policy and not simply remain hapless victims of corporate titans, political elites and global markets. "We do not believe we have the strength to resist all the restructuring the government promotes," says Jong-Soae Oh, the youthful vice president of the militant Korean Metalworkers Federation. "But that does not mean that we just sit back and let it happen." ■

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What Kind of Kosovo?

Pristina, Kosovo

By Paul Hockenos

Though technically part of Yugoslavia, today Kosovo is neither a republic, an autonomous province nor an independent state. It is now an international protectorate. The term protectorate inevitably evokes associations of 19th century-style imperialism, of far-flung colonies and patronizing administrators. These associations are hard to resist. Instead of Istanbul, Berlin or Belgrade, today's Kosovars will look to New York for the decrees that will regulate their lives. As much as this seems to please Kosovars for the moment, protectorate is the opposite of the Kosovars' self-stated goal: self-determination.

But those historical associations need not restrict the current debate. NATO's military operation against Yugoslavia was no imperialistic war, and the protectorate in Kosovo and quasi-protectorate in Bosnia are neither constructions of new empires nor colonial outposts. What kind of protectorate will exist in Kosovo is at the moment still unclear. But the opportunity is there to reinvent the concept, to fill it with a democratic, civic content befitting the end of the 20th century, one that will help create a basis for long-term peace and stability in the region.

The chief reason for placing Kosovo under U.N. administration was to put the issue of Kosovo's permanent status indefinitely on hold, and thus to create a fixed point of stability in an extraordinarily unstable region. This status enables Kosovars to concentrate on

issues more pertinent to their daily lives, like rebuilding hospitals, schools and industry. It gives Serbia and Montenegro room to democratize, and it acts as a safety valve, taking pressure off Albania and Macedonia.

Sure enough, the United Nations will have the final word over all matters in Kosovo, from civil administration to school curricula.

This authority could be wielded in a paternalistic, condescending way that will breed passivity, dependence and ultimately contempt—as colonial protectorates have done in the past. Or, the international administration could help democratic forces in Kosovo create a pluralistic democracy, civil society and self-sustaining economy. To do that, it will have to work closely with young professionals, nongovernmental organizations and other groups that show potential as future leaders. Although Kosovars have never ruled themselves in this century, there are democratic and civic traditions to draw on. For eight years, Kosovars at home and abroad designed, funded and organized a functioning shadow state with underground schools, hospitals and even a university, all within the most repressive context in Europe.

At the same time, the international administration must do everything in its power to undermine and sideline the strong nationalist current that exists, and has gained ground recently, in Kosovar political culture. So far, the international community, in particular the United States, has done exactly the opposite. Rather than show strong support for capable moderate forces, like Prime Minister Bujar Bukoshi, who has returned to Kosovo after eight years in exile in Germany, the West has inexplicably

backed the nationalist KLA leader Hasim Thaci. Admittedly, Thaci is critical to getting the KLA under control and meeting the disarmament deadlines. But, in the long run, thugs like Thaci and his cohorts have nothing to offer Kosovo.

Whenever free elections are held, a moderate-liberal bloc will face a nationalist bloc, just as in Bosnia.

And, just as in Bosnia, the election of nationalist leaders will stall the democratization process, jeopardize regional security and forever label the Balkans as incorrigible. The ethnic logic of the Dayton agreement made the election and re-election of nationalists a *fait accompli*. Washington's foolish support for Thaci and his wing of the KLA could well do the same.

Some critics object that the international community's open favoring of moderates over nationalists is itself undemocratic. The opposite is true. In Bosnia, the international community's willingness (in the name of healthy pluralism) to allow undemocratic forces to use the democratic process for undemocratic means has enabled nationalists on all three sides to block the peace process and maintain the status quo. All too rarely have SFOR, the NATO-led stabilization force, or the civilian administration exerted their authorized powers to act against obstructing forces. In the unique context of postwar Bosnia—or as the case may be, Kosovo—international authorities can and must use the full extent of their powers to nurture the conditions for a democratic culture. Otherwise, there is simply no reason to waste the time or money to referee over "fair" shouting matches between ultranationalist reactionaries.

This goes for the media there as well. In no Western country is the freedom of expression unlimited, especially not in places such as Germany, with its own wartime past. In the Balkans, hate speech and inflammatory rhetoric were key ingredients in setting peoples against one another. Regulation of such language does not violate the principle of free media, but rather puts limits on the kind of malicious propaganda that provokes ethnic conflict.

The Next Leader?

Veton Surroi is the publisher of the independent Kosovar daily newspaper, *Koha Ditore*. The 37-year-old Kosovar Albanian is considered by many to be the most important person in Kosovo and possibly its next president. During the war, Surroi refused to leave Pristina, remaining in hiding from the Serbian authorities. *Koha Ditore* still is being published in Macedonia, where it set up shop during the conflict, and will resume publishing in Kosovo by the end of the summer. Surroi spoke with Paul Hockenos in Pristina.

The overwhelming majority of ordinary Bosnians, Kosovars and other Balkan peoples want to live in a peaceful, prosperous Western-oriented societies. For international authorities to act in the interests of those people, even if their politicians do not, is essentially democratic. It is the only way to break the cycle of fear and suspicion that keeps the nationalists in power.

Is Kosovo liberated?

This is an historic opportunity to build this place the way it should have been built a hundred years ago. In a way, this is the end of the Ottoman Empire. The empire was the one type of rule that all Balkan peoples shared. After it fell, the Kosovars were the only ones without any say in their own affairs. This is the first time the people here will vote freely in this century.

The international protectorate already has botched its first major test in Kosovo by failing to protect the Kosovar Serbs and Gypsies, a debacle that will have far-reaching consequences. As deep as animosity has been, the Serbs' wholesale exodus from Kosovo was by no means a foregone conclusion. It was made possible by three factors: The chilling scale of atrocities and war crimes perpetrated by Serbs, exacerbated by NATO bombing and the refusal to commit ground troops to protect Kosovar civilians; the belated and passive reaction of KFOR troops, in particular the Italians and French, to Albanian revenge acts; and the failure of prominent Kosovars like Bukoshi or Thaci or Veton Surroi (see sidebar) to publicly condemn attacks against Serbs and call for tolerance.

Thus, there's now another international protectorate in the Balkans committed in word to a multiethnic society that in fact no longer exists. ■

What are you expecting from the U.N. protectorate?

There are no clear instructions or precedent for what the United Nations can do. It's an unprecedented situation. Some people are thinking about Bosnia, saying maybe we can duplicate the peacekeeping mission there. The best way is to forget about Bosnia. There's absolutely nothing you can take over from Bosnia here. It has got to be a totally new design.

How long should Kosovo remain a protectorate?

For as many years as necessary.

The revenge acts carried out by Kosovar Albanians against Serbs and Roma are deeply disturbing. Is it now inconceivable for Serbs and Albanians to live together in Kosovo?

I think it's possible for some of the Serbs to come back. Part of this whole story is that over the last 10 years the Serbs gambled all or nothing. They were colonial administrators for the first time in history. The Serbs have collective responsibility, since in no society can a minority maintain fascism. Fascism is maintained by a majority, which is either willing or not doing a thing to stop it. But I don't think there should be collective punishment. I think Serbs should have a right to share the risks of building a new society here.

Who will lead the Kosovar Albanians?

I don't want to see any of the established political forces here being the future of Kosovo. I'd like a whole restructuring of this society. What we have right now is a category of political thought that was basically a competition for who would be the loudest in saying we want independence. The main line expressed by politicians here was: "We are the descendants of Illyrians. We have been here 2,000 years. Therefore, by definition, we should have a right to a state." That was it. When you ask what kind of social security system do you want? What about health care? What about the economy? Just ask any of the politicians what kind of privatization program they would engage in, and you'll find a total lack of answers.

What about President Ibrahim Rugova?

Rugova's behavior in past years was shameful. He has absolutely no talent for what he thinks he's doing. He has a very restricted capacity for political thought, and even more restricted capacity in political activity. By not having done anything over these past years, he has created a very bad impression of a society that simply sits on its butt and waits for the day independence will be granted to it. He was popular, and in the West too, because you have sympathy toward this fragile figure that leads the people when Milosevic's around. It doesn't cost anything to support Rugova, to pat him on the shoulder and say, yeah, we support you, go back home. That's why nobody took this place seriously for a long time.

Many people speak of you as the next president of Kosovo.

At the moment we won't have a president. My first priority is *Koha Ditore*. I think this is the most important institution in Kosovo over the last two years, one that created a new political atmosphere here. We were very powerful, and we think we should be as powerful.

All Kosovar Albanians agree on one point: Kosovo must eventually be independent from Yugoslavia.

I don't think we should be worried about the issue of permanent status, but rather freeze the issue until democratic institutions in Kosovo, and in the whole region, can make that decision. The question of permanent status will be directly linked to the capacity of the Kosovars to build their own society. If this is a messy place in four or five years, forget independence. If this is a functional democracy in five years, it will be an option that will not be a four-letter word anymore.

International policy can't definitively close the door on any solution. The process of the disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia is not yet finished. It is at its finishing stages. According to U.N. Security Council resolutions, there is something called FRY (The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), which is composed of a Serbian fascist state headed by a war criminal, and Montenegro, which was strengthened as a democracy throughout the process, and an international protectorate in Kosovo. Now three totally different political systems are put into one country. That is absolutely a non-existent state. FRY doesn't exist. ■



JACK DABAGHIAN/REUTERS

dioxin:

It's What's for Dinner!



By Terry J. Allen

Between mid-January and the end of May, hundreds of tons of food—potentially contaminated with dioxin and PCBs—entered the United States from Europe. Some already has been eaten, some still sits on shelves in stores and pantries.

The problem started in January in Belgium when a small fat-rendering company incorporated dioxin- and PCB-laced oil into its recycled fat. Eighty tons of poisoned fat then was sold to at least a dozen animal feed companies, most in Belgium, but at least one each in France and Holland. Like ink dropped in a glass of water, the 1,800 tons of animal feed they manufactured spread around the world through vast corporate food chains and complex international trade networks.

It took Belgian officials until March—when a startlingly high number of chickens started mysteriously dropping dead—to discover the contamination. After tracing the problem to the dioxin-laced fat, the government sat on the information until May 27 before going public. By then it was far too late to contain the economic, political and public health disaster. Belgian farmers lost more than a half-billion dollars; the ruling party lost the June election; and an unknowable number of reproductive and nervous system problems and cancers were spawned.

During the four months between contamination and disclosure, livestock had eaten the feed, stored the dioxin in their body fat, and passed it on in milk, eggs and meat to humans and other animals. Some food contained almost 1,000 times the U.S. limit for the cumulative poison; just one of the contaminated eggs could increase a 3-year-old child's dioxin load by 20 percent.

Dioxin and PCBs are dangerous toxic chemicals and potent carcinogens that pose a serious public health threat. It takes 20,000 times less dioxin than DDT to kill a person outright. But the real danger is that dioxin and PCBs accumulate in body fat over a lifetime and are passed on to fetuses in the womb and to babies through breast milk. The French ministry of the environment estimated last year that as many as 5,200 French people die each year from cancer caused by dioxins. Even low doses are dangerous according to a 1994 Environmental Protection Agency report, which found no "safe" level. "The levels of dioxins needed to cause cancer," says Martin van den Berg, a member of a World Health Organization advisory panel, "are a hundred to a thousand times higher than the levels that cause cognitive and hormonal damage."


As the extent of the problem became apparent, Belgium recalled up to 800 products, shut down 1,400 farms and issued directives that affected approximately 100,000 businesses. France identified 103 of its farms that could have purchased the tainted feed. Around the world, dozens of countries acted within days to ban potentially contaminated meat and dairy products. In most of Europe—and in nations as far away as Malaysia, Thailand, South Korea, Cyprus and New Zealand—pork, poultry and beef products, Belgian chocolates

rich with cream centers, mayonnaise, ice cream, egg pastas, cookies and cakes made with butter or cream disappeared from stores. European Union nations—as well as countries as far-flung and little-known for their consumer protection policies as China, Russia, the Philippines, Jordan, Indonesia and Kenya—not only embargoed suspected foods, but sought out and seized items already in circulation.

The U.S. response was marked with inconsistencies. The Food and Drug Administration, which regulates all food except meat and poultry, waited until June 11 to put a hold on animal feed from the EU and egg products from Belgium, Holland and France; on June 23, it embargoed Belgian dairy products. Officials at the Center for Veterinary Medicine were astonished to discover the amount of animal feed that was either imported from, manufactured in, or incorporated ingredients from Europe. They estimated that hundreds of tons of potentially contaminated products, from kitty snacks to dairy cow starter, entered the United States during the four-month window and admitted they had no way to trace batches back to manufacturers.

But the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which oversees meat and poultry, acted quickly with one of the world's stiffest bans. On June 4, it issued a total hold on all EU meat and poultry, even going so far as to ban aged hams produced well before the contamination took place. The USDA's apparently zealous concern for consumer safety was undercut by the conspicuous lack of a recall or consumer warnings. It neither withdrew nor tested any of the 10 million pounds of pork from Belgium, Holland and France; 141,000 pounds of poultry from France; tons of eggs and egg-containing products; as well as the hundreds of tons of animal feed that entered the country between the January accident and June embargo.

Explaining the double standard, USDA spokeswoman Beth Gaston noted: "A ban is based on potential [to cause harm]. But we would only order a recall based on data. We don't have data." But one reason the United States lacked the data was that—unlike Russia or Tunisia, for example—it waited for weeks to begin tests. It was mid-June before either agency began tests on products at ports of entry; the FDA has tested some products in stores, the USDA has not. Thus far, no significant levels of dioxin have been documented.

 The inconsistent U.S. response—the broad embargo paired with an absence of recall or even in-country product testing—has sparked speculation about hidden motives. As *The Des Moines Register* put it, "The Belgian food scare is a perfect opportunity for the U.S. to hit back at the European Union's ban on imports of hormone-treated beef."

Speaking on condition of anonymity, one USDA employee acknowledges that public health was not the only consideration in determining policy. "There is the whole international trade thing, [the recent trade wars over] bananas, pork, beef. ... Any of these international issues could be coming into play."

In play at the time was Europe's ban on U.S. beef and restrictions and labeling laws of various EU countries on genetically modified organisms. While Americans have grown used to factory farming and centralized agribusiness, the concept is relatively new to Europe, which still has a strong tradition of small family farms and high-quality, locally grown seasonal produce.


Since 1996, though, Europe has had a crash course in the dangers of industrializing food production. That year, the European Commission banned exports of British beef after strong evidence emerged showing that mad cow disease could infect humans. The brain illness in cattle—bovine spongiform encephalopathy—was spread by the practice of feeding the animals ground-up remains of infected animals, turning the herbivores into cannibals to boost their protein consumption. The next year, Holland slaughtered 10 million pigs to contain an epidemic of contagious swine fever that had spread like wildfire through large, densely stocked farms.

It is no wonder that EU consumers are deeply suspicious of such U.S. industrial "pharming" practices as incorporating genetically modified organisms into crops, routine dosing of beef cows with growth-enhancing hormones, and giving prophylactic antibiotics to livestock. But to the United States, eager to market its high-tech foods, such consumer resistance is a nightmare. David Aaron, U.S. undersecretary of commerce for international trade, decried "an atmosphere that can only be described as nearly hysterical concerning food safety in the European Union."

The U.S. beef industry claims that "hysteria" has cost it \$200 million a year in lost sales, while limits on genetically modified foods threaten agribusiness with billions in lost research costs and expected profits. In testimony before Congress on June 15, Stuart Eizenstat, undersecretary of state for economic, business and agricultural affairs, predicted, "Within a few years, virtually 100 percent of our agricultural commodity exports will either be genetically modified or mixed with genetically modified products."

Steven Suppan of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy characterized this prediction as "an iteration of the U.S. policy not to segregate genetically modified products from traditionally produced foods—consumer choice be damned."

It is hard to understand why, if the USDA was alarmed enough to issue a blanket ban on all European products under its jurisdiction, it neither issued a recall nor tested the food on the shelves.

 While Europe was still reeling from the Belgian scandal, officials met in Bonn on June 21 for the biannual EU-U.S. summit. Though the trading blocs seemed to be at a standoff, the United States surprisingly gained some ground when European leaders agreed, as one U.S. official noted, "to put science into the discussion."

After mad cow disease, repeated instances of French blood tainted with HIV and now the dioxin debacle, the EU was hard-pressed to argue that its regulatory system was superior or even safe. USDA Secretary Dan Glickman seized on the dioxin scandal as yet another example of Europe's failure to protect its food supply and as an opportunity to tout the U.S. science-based system as the only rational alternative. "When I chaired the U.S. delegation to the World Food Conference in Rome in 1996," he told the National Press Club on July 13,

"I got pelted with genetically modified soybeans by naked protesters. I began to realize the level of opposition and distrust in parts of Europe to biotechnology, [and that it] comes in part from the lack of faith in the EU to assure the safety of their food. They have no independent regulatory agencies like the FDA, USDA or EPA."

Basing food safety decisions on science sounds reasonable—given the complexity of the issues, the high stakes and the temptation by both sides to disguise protectionist practices as safety issues. But it depends on what you mean by

U.S. policy is not to segregate genetically modified products from traditionally produced foods—consumer choice be damned.

science. "Science is not an absolute matter," says Jan Groenveld, an agricultural counselor with the Dutch embassy. "We in Europe are more concerned about long-term effects. That we have found no proof of danger in the short term does not mean there are no long-term risks."

His position illustrates one of the two competing approaches to consumer protection—the precautionary principle under which products that could cause serious or irreparable harm must be proven safe before approval. Consumer advocates and environmentalists support this approach, arguing that humans should not be used as guinea pigs.

Industry and much of the U.S. government favor the other approach, so-called "science-based" decision-making. They argue that it is impossible to prove that something is 100 percent safe. Therefore, given the potential benefits to humanity as well as profits to U.S. industry, new products and technologies should be approved unless or until they can be proven dangerous.

The apparent move by EU leaders toward "science-based" decision-making, and away from "hysteria," delighted U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky. Speaking of the summit, she noted, "The tone of the discussion on the biotech, hormone and food safety issues was probably the most constructive we have ever had."

A few days earlier, at the G-8 meeting also held in Germany, French President Jacques Chirac nearly soured the mood. He accused the United States and Canada of ignoring public health concerns by attempting to overturn the EU ban on beef from cattle treated with growth hormones and called for a global authority to oversee food safety. But in what Patrick Woodall of Public Citizen calls "a significant compromise" by Europe, the G-8 agreed instead to refer biotechnology disputes to a panel of scientific experts at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, a body known to be relatively sympathetic to biotechnology. Woodall predicts that the OECD panel will turn the precau-

tionary principle on its head by making nations prove that biotechnology is dangerous rather than making corporations prove it is safe.

In this new spirit of cooperation, according to the *Financial Times*, Barshefsky offered "an apparent goodwill gesture," announcing that the United States hoped to substantially narrow its ban on EU pork and poultry imposed after the dioxin scandal. But since the dangers of dioxin are undisputed—the imported food either contains it or not—it is hard to imagine what part "goodwill" could play in protecting U.S. consumers. Nor is it easy to understand why, if the USDA was alarmed enough to issue a blanket ban on all European products under its jurisdiction, it neither issued a recall nor tested food on the shelves.

While the Belgian dioxin scandal may have proven politically opportune for U.S. policy-makers, it may have less happy consequences for consumers. There is no way to assess the quantity of Belgian dioxin that people around the world consumed before the ban and—in the United States, with its lack of recall—after it. The chemicals already are pervasive in the environment and the Belgian contaminants simply will be added to the carcinogens already stored in the body fat of all the world's mammals.

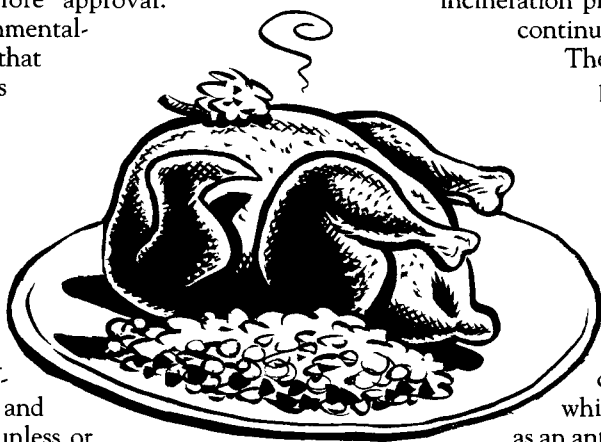
Indeed, far more dioxins than were in Belgium's poisoned animal feed routinely enter the environment, mostly from incineration plants. In some cases, contamination continues for years without being noticed.

The Belgian contamination, for example, might never have been uncovered if the feed had gone only to cows and pigs. The particular dioxin involved happened to be deadly to chickens and a state veterinarian thought to test for it. In the southeast United States in 1997, the EPA discovered that for years chickens and farm-raised catfish had been eating feed to which dioxin-rich clay had been added as an anti-caking agent. According to reporting by Deborah MacKenzie in the British magazine *New Scientist*, the FDA eventually banned the feed—but allowed moderately contaminated chickens to be sold as food, as long as most of the fat was removed. While levels in the U.S. samples—at least at the time they were discovered—were lower than in the Belgian feed, the contamination had a longer time to accumulate in consumers.

In the end, the Belgian incident was extraordinary not for the quantity of dioxin involved but for the way it spread so quickly around the world. The combination of industrial farming and globalization created conditions under which accident or misconduct by one small producer had worldwide political, economic and health consequences.

The use of this crisis by the United States to score trade points while risking consumer health should give Europeans pause as they consider putting their trust in a U.S.-type regulatory system and its commitment to "science." ■

Terry J. Allen is a Vermont-based journalist.



AFRICA IS DYING

By SALIM MUWAKKIL

On World AIDS Day last year, a South African woman who publicly acknowledged her HIV-positive status was beaten to death for revealing something that brought disgrace to her community. That impulse to "kill the messenger" rather than heed the message is one of many reasons why AIDS is devastating the African continent. A lethal mixture of proximity (the HIV virus was born in Africa) and poverty, tradition and ignorance, denial and neglect has made Africa the epicenter of the AIDS epidemic.

According to Dr. Peter Piot, executive director of the U.N. Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) in Geneva, two-thirds of the world's estimated 33 million people infected with the HIV virus and 95 percent of the world's AIDS orphans live in Africa. AIDS is now the continent's biggest killer. The situation is so dire that demographers predict that by 2010 the ravages of AIDS will reduce life expectancy on much of the continent by an astonishing 20 years.

Although the entire sub-Saharan region has been hit hard by AIDS, the epidemic is spreading most rapidly in southern Africa. In Botswana and Zimbabwe, for example, one of every four adults is infected with the HIV virus, according to UNAIDS estimates. In Malawi, AIDS already has cut average life expectancy from 51 to 37. In Zambia, 360,000 children have been orphaned by AIDS. South Africa also is reaching a state of crisis. From 1994, when free elections ended apartheid, to 1998, the infection rate rose from 7.6 percent to nearly 18 percent. In South Africa's most populous province, KwaZulu-Natal, the rate has reached 27 percent.

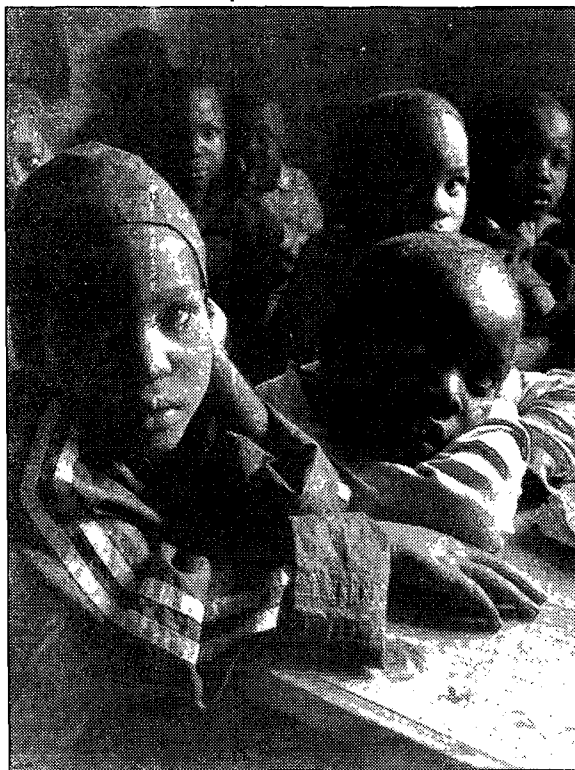
Some analysts predict that entire sectors of the African economy are threatened by the depopulating effects of the AIDS crisis. The loss of manpower and profits will further handicap a region that already is severely crippled. "Eight to 10 years from now, in that portion of the population that's supposed to be working, earning and driving the economy, there's going to be nobody," says Nono Simelela, South Africa's national director of AIDS programs.

The shocking scope of this tragedy provokes a feeling of helplessness and dismay. News that the virus is on the retreat in the West has added confusion to the mix. More aggressive treatments and protease-inhibiting drugs have produced significant improvements in the quality of life of AIDS sufferers with access to the medication. Some U.S. publications have headlined

stories heralding the epidemic's demise, even as the virus' death march spreads across much of the world.

But the \$10,000 to \$20,000 yearly expense for treatment of AIDS is more than many Africans make in an entire lifetime. Thus, a growing number of voices are calling for a more urgent global response to AIDS' rampage through Africa, including aggressive efforts to lower the costs of the anti-retroviral drugs.

Activists of varying stripes have organized a series of protests demanding cheaper medicines



CORINNE DUFKA/REUTERS

AIDS orphans at school in Kenya.

for AIDS patients in Africa. Ron Dellums, the retired California congressman who now heads a health care management firm, has taken a visible role as a modern day Cassandra, alerting the American public to the cataclysmic potential of the AIDS epidemic in Africa. "I think what we're talking about is one of the great moral imperatives of our generation," Dellums, 63, told the *Washington Post* earlier this year. "We're talking about 21 million people dying from AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa over the next 10 years. How do you get your mind around that?"

Dellums, who served for 27 years as one of Congress' most progressive voices, is proposing what he calls an AIDS Marshall Plan for Africa. His project would enlist pharmaceutical companies, scientists, doctors and government officials in a massive effort to corral the raging virus. Although few specifics have been revealed, Dellums' plan has been incorporated into legislation that soon will be introduced by his political successor, Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.).

Despite the devastation in Africa, health workers in many countries have been unable to alter the behavior that helps spread the HIV virus. Polygamy is a common cultural practice in many African societies, and nomadic employment patterns abet sexual promiscuity. Traditions of male privilege also discourage women from demanding condom protection.

A variety of myths born of ignorance and traditional beliefs also hamper AIDS prevention efforts in Africa. According to a story in the *Los Angeles Times* last year and an

BY 2010 THE RAVAGES OF AIDS WILL REDUCE LIFE EXPECTANCY ON MUCH OF THE CONTINENT BY AN ASTONISHING 20 YEARS.

increasing number of anecdotal reports, there is a disturbing folk belief that having sex with a virgin will exorcise the HIV virus. This belief is being spread primarily by traditional healers who have far greater influence than medical professionals—especially among Africa's uneducated masses.

An AIDS counselor at a Johannesburg health clinic told the *Times* that about one-third of the HIV-infected men she encounters believe that unprotected sex with a virgin will cure them. It seems that this epidemic is fueling an attendant epidemic in child abuse and rape. Police and court officials, social workers and women's rights activists say sexual violence against children is becoming a significant—although mostly unspoken—contributor to the disease among Africa's youngest generation.

South African health officials quoted by the *Times* say adolescent girls are twice as likely to become infected with HIV as boys, a reflection of their increased, often unwilling, sexual activity with older men. Zorodzai Machekanyanga of the Women and AIDS Support Network in Zimbabwe is not surprised by the figures. "These problems with rape and AIDS are new," she says, "but they come from a familiar source. The girl child has no value in African society. She is a thing to be used to make men's lives better."

And yet the stigma surrounding AIDS seriously inhibits candid discussion. A report in the Johannesburg-based *Daily Mail & Guardian* noted many HIV-positive people in South Africa fear that revealing their status could mean isolation from their communities—or even murder. "The stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS in African society is a powerful one," writes *Mail & Guardian* reporter Aaron Nicodemus. "People living with the disease are often fearful of their neighbor's response. They are often ashamed they contracted the disease. Some even consider killing themselves."

Concerns about cultural imperialism also cloud the issue. One reason why folk beliefs persist is the reluctance of outsiders to challenge them. It's a serious dilemma for those trying to alter behavior without demeaning indigenous traditions. The healers—called *nyanga* and *sangoma* in southern Africa—who prescribe virgin cures often are highly respected elders in their communities. This complicates the task of health workers in Africa who must educate the public about AIDS without incurring the wrath of the traditionalists.

But there is hope. Uganda, for example, has dramatically reduced infections among pregnant women through an aggressive program focusing on condom use and sexual restraint. In Tanzania, an intensified focus on early treatment of sexually transmitted diseases cut the spread of HIV significantly. And in West African countries like Senegal, where AIDS hit later than elsewhere, condom use has skyrocketed.

The real hope comes from an international community that is willing to devote sufficient resources to fighting the problem. "Clearly the \$150 million a year currently being spent on AIDS in Africa comes nowhere near what is needed," U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in a June speech. "To carry out a minimally effective package of interventions, the affected countries would require at least a six-fold increase in resources."

Although the Clinton administration understands the enormity of the crisis, its resource commitment is hardly adequate. On July 19, the administration declared the United States would devote \$100 million to fight AIDS in Africa. The new policy, announced by Vice President Al Gore, would provide \$48 million to contain the AIDS pandemic through a variety of prevention strategies. Nearly \$23 million would fund community-based clinics and health care workers providing treatment, counseling and palliative care. More than \$10 million would establish programs to care for children orphaned by AIDS in Africa. (UNAIDS estimates that more than 8 million children have been orphaned.) And \$19 million is earmarked to help sub-Saharan countries develop disease surveillance programs. Until this pledge, the United States had spent about \$74 million a year on AIDS programs in a region with 22 million victims. In contrast, Congress recently voted to spend \$1.1 billion to assist about 750,000 Kosovo refugees.

AIDS activists say the Clinton administration still isn't doing enough. Recent reports have exposed Gore's support of pharmaceutical companies that demand more potent license protections for drugs in South Africa. Such restrictions hamper efforts to make anti-AIDS drugs cheaper. Many see the new policy as a spin on that controversy.

The problem is urgent and the need is great. It seems Dellums' idea for a massive Marshall Plan-like effort would be the most effective approach to this human catastrophe. In any event, his grand vision is commensurate with the enormous stakes. The immediate cost of failure is immeasurable devastation to the continent that gave birth to human civilization. The extended costs are to humanity itself. ■

Research assistance by **Amba Kone**.

THE REAL DRUG CRISIS

BY DEAN BAKER

A Gore's recent campaign events have been marred by some uninvited guests. The vice president has been heckled by protesters who object to his efforts to pressure South Africa to enforce U.S. patents on AIDS drugs.

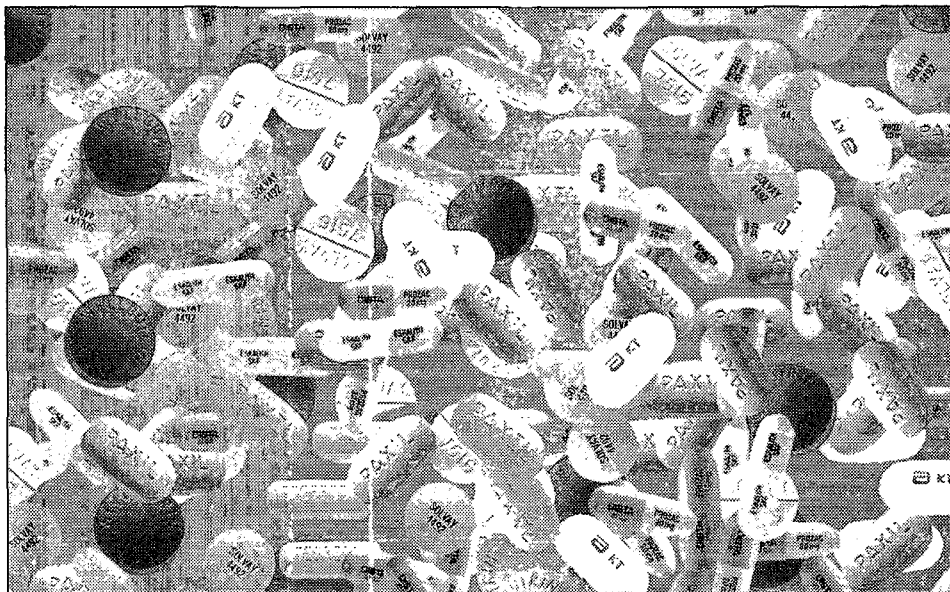
On its surface, the issue is a simple case of lives versus profit. In parts of South Africa, 30 percent of young adults are HIV-positive. The most effective combinations of AIDS drugs cost individuals more than \$10,000 a year in the United States, but the per capita income of black South Africans is less than \$1,000 a year. If the U.S. patents are enforced, the vast majority of South Africans infected with AIDS will not be able to get treatment, and millions will die. However, in the absence of patent protection, these drugs could be profitably produced at prices of less than \$200 annually per user.

But the industry says if South Africa is allowed to produce AIDS drugs without respecting U.S. patents, then drug manufacturers will have less money to finance future research. Furthermore, if South Africa can get away without honoring U.S. drug patents, other developing nations will surely follow suit, reducing drug company profits even more. And if drugs can be purchased in developing nations for less than 5 percent of their patent-protected price in the United States, how long will it be before these low-cost drugs find their way into this country? In short, if the U.S. patent laws aren't enforced everywhere, the research process could grind to a halt.

The domino theory on patent evasion may overstate the case, but the industry does have a valid point. Patent protection makes research profitable. If firms can't anticipate making a profit, they won't do it. While this argument would never justify policies that condemn millions of people to death, it does suggest that the issue of financing research and development needs greater attention.

The patent system is just one method of supporting pharmaceutical research. In many ways, this system is a textbook example of bad economics. It leads to enormous inefficiency in the distribution of drugs, creates perverse incentives in directing research, and results in exactly the sorts of market distortions and corruption that economists expect when the government creates a state-sanctioned monopoly.

The most basic principle in economic theory is that goods should sell at their marginal cost of production (including a normal profit). In the case of patented drugs, prescriptions that are produced for as little as \$1 each can sell for hundreds



STEVE ANDERSON

of dollars as a result of patent protection. The rationale for this gap is that the firm has to be able to recover its research costs, which are often quite significant.

However, at the point the drug is being produced, the research costs are history. According to economic theory, it is inefficient to try to roll these costs into the price of the drugs. The inefficiency associated with patent protection in pharmaceuticals is enormous. The United States currently spends close to \$100 billion a year on prescription drugs. In the absence of patent protection, the cost of these drugs would fall to less than \$25 billion. This works out to a savings of more than \$500 a year for every household in the country. By contrast, the proponents of deregulation in the airlines, trucking and telecommunications industries put the gains from each of these policies in the neighborhood of \$10 billion to \$20

billion annually—nowhere close to the potential gains from eliminating patent protection in the pharmaceutical industry.

In addition to leading to enormous inefficiency, the government monopoly provided by patent protection steers research into unproductive areas. Suppose Glaxo Wellcome, a major drug manufacturer, developed a foolproof cure for lung cancer. As soon as this became known, its competitors would immediately shift large sums of research dollars to developing cures for lung cancer to try to get a chunk of the profits that this drug would earn. If a competitor could copy the innovation in a way that evaded Glaxo's patent, it would stand to make enormous profits, since it too could market a cure. This research would be almost a complete waste from a social standpoint, since a cure for the disease already would have been developed. But the incentives of patent protection ensure that much research of this nature takes place. A 1993 study by the Office of Technology Assessment found that two-thirds of all drug patents fell into this "copycat" category, meaning that they did not involve qualitatively new treatments for diseases.

The patent system encourages other types of abuses as well. For example, there have been a series of press accounts in recent years of industry efforts to either falsify or suppress research results that reflected unfavorably on a firm's products. The extent to which such behavior actually takes place is impossible to know, but clearly the existing system provides enormous incentives to conceal information. At

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the very least, the industry's drive for patents often significantly delays the dissemination of research findings. Industry-supported researchers almost always must sign away their right to publish research findings without prior approval. Such approval will generally not be granted until a firm has had the opportunity to file for any patents that might be derived from the research.

The monopoly profits guaranteed by patent protection also provide an enormous incentive for firms to market their drugs aggressively, even in cases where they may not provide the best treatment. According to the industry's data, it currently employs 40 percent more people in marketing than research. These marketing agents often make aggressive and misleading sales pitches to doctors, who generally lack the time and expertise to verify the industry's claims independently. In some cases, the sales pitches take the form of bribes, as drug companies pay for lavish vacation "seminars,"

in which doctors can learn about the latest medical breakthroughs in Hawaii or Tahiti.

Monopoly profits also encourage the drug companies to spend large sums of money protecting and extending their patents. One of the leading contributors to the political campaigns of both parties, the industry has been pushing not only to have their patent protection extended around the world, but to have the life of specific patents extended beyond their normal expiration date, which is 20 years after a drug is approved by the FDA. For instance, Schering-Plough, one of the nation's largest pharmaceutical manufacturers, currently is spending millions on a lobbying campaign to have the patent for the allergy drug Claritin extended by three years. According to estimates from Public Citizen, such a patent extension would cost consumers as much as \$3.2 billion over the three-year period. Such efforts at ad hoc patent extension have become common in recent years, and they are often successful.

If there were no alternative way to support research, we would have no choice but to tolerate the inefficiency and abuse associated with pharmaceutical patents. However, according to its own data, the pharmaceutical industry funds only 43 percent of medical research in the United States. The federal government funds close to a third of all medical research, primarily through the National Institutes of Health. Universities, private foundations and charities account for the rest. These other methods of funding research have a proven track record. This research has produced a long list of major medical breakthroughs, including the discovery of penicillin, the polio vaccine and AZT (though not its use as an AIDS treatment). In just the past two months, NIH researchers developed a vaccine that will prevent the transmission of AIDS through breast feeding, and a use for aspirin that will reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes for people undergoing heart surgery.

The industry is presently spending approximately \$20 billion a year on research. Some portion of this spending, probably in the neighborhood of one-third, is devoted to researching copycat drugs. But in the absence of the patent system, such research would serve no purpose. This means the amount of research spending that would have to be picked up in the absence of patent protection comes to approximately \$13.3 billion a year. This amount is approximately equal to what state and federal governments could expect to save on Medicare and Medicaid payments for prescription drugs in the absence of patent protection. In other words, the government revenue needed to replace the industry's research spending could come almost exclusively from savings on current government drug payments. This would allow the patented price of drugs to fall to a free market price that on average would be less than 25 percent (and in many cases less than 5 percent) of the patent-protected price. It is difficult to envision a policy that offers larger potential gains.

Of course, patent protection for pharmaceuticals is not going to end tomorrow. The industry has an incredibly powerful lobby and there are serious legal obstacles that would prevent the simple elimination of patent protection.

But there are a number of steps in this direction that should sit high on the progressive agenda:


- The U.S. government should not force our patents on developing nations. This is a straight transfer of wealth from the world's poor to the drug industry. There are few forms of protectionism that are more economically inefficient and morally unjustifiable than this one. In this case, progressives should support free trade.
- No ad hoc extensions of patents should be permitted. If a firm feels that the current patent system doesn't give them sufficient protection, they should argue their case in the courts, not Congress. They knew the rules when they initially undertook their research. Changing them after the fact is simply a handout from the public.
- Research that is paid for by the government should be owned by the government. There are numerous incidents where the pharmaceutical industry has taken advantage of government research to develop a drug, and then secured the patent for themselves. Congress should insist that the NIH be aggressive in defending the fruits of its research. If the industry wants to profit from NIH research, then it should pay for the right to do so.
- Collective buying arrangements should be promoted wherever possible. The federal government already forces the pharmaceutical industry to provide discounts of more than 15 percent on drugs for Medicaid recipients. Clinton's Medicare drug plan would establish a similar sort of collective buying arrangement for those who sign up. If collective buying programs were established in the states that did not already have them or at the federal level, it would take some of the excess profits away from the industry and bring prices a bit more down to earth.

Finally, there should be some serious testing of alternative paths for supporting research. There are some areas of medical research, such as cancer, where the industry role is still relatively small. If such areas could be parceled off, with the government buying up existing patents and making a commitment, along with private charities and foundations, to support further research, it would be possible to establish a test for an alternative to the patent system. Then researchers could examine the relative importance of the breakthroughs and the cost of achieving them in the two sectors. Patent-supported research may be the superior route. Alternatively, if the open research proved better, we could let the patent system expire as a means of supporting pharmaceutical research.

If the Gore protesters can keep up the heat, perhaps he will end his dependence on drug company campaign contributions in the same way that he earlier kicked a tobacco-growing habit. Maybe then he will be able to reinvent himself as an advocate of a free market in pharmaceuticals. ■

Dean Baker, a senior research fellow at The Preamble Center, writes a weekly media commentary, The Economic Reporting Review, available online at www.fair.org.

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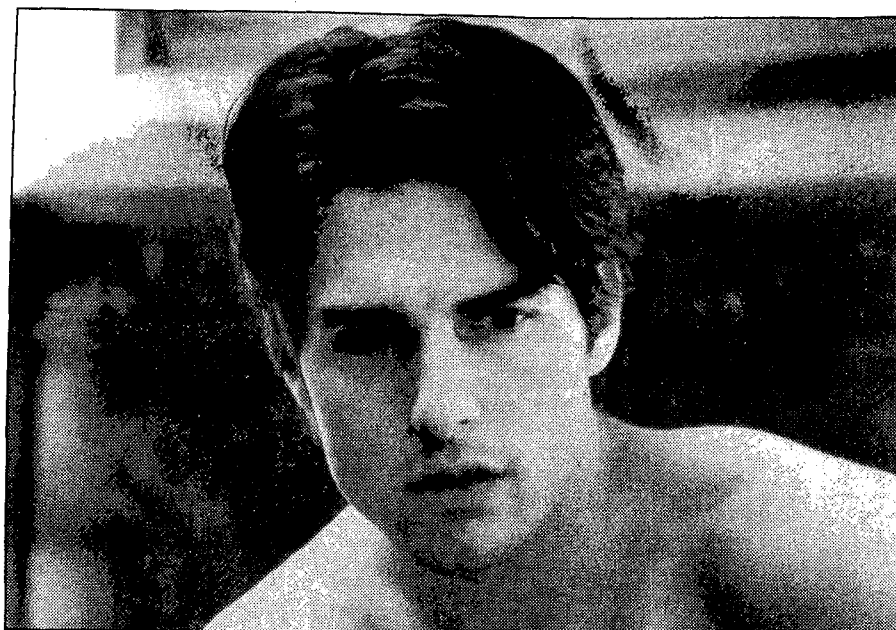
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Kubrick's Tough Love

By Joe Knowles

Since Stanley Kubrick died last March at the age of 70, tributes to the great director's career have been non-stop, and the buzz surrounding *Eyes Wide Shut*, his final film, has been building like a crescendo in a symphony. The latter is not so accidental; Kubrick, the storied control freak, cared nearly as much about the marketing of his movies as he did the actual making of them.

Eyes Wide Shut
Directed by Stanley Kubrick

This is perhaps why, for once, a media snowball seems appropriate. And, by the way, deserved: The good news is that *Eyes Wide Shut* is a great movie, bearing all the touches of a master.

Eyes Wide Shut is like a wander through Dante's *Inferno*, but without the reassurance of Virgil as a tour guide. The wanderer in this case is a well-off doctor, Bill Harford (Tom Cruise), and what draws him into the wood is jealousy over his wife, Alice (Nicole Kidman). It begins mundanely enough in the bathroom of the Harfords' Manhattan apartment, then on to a swank Christmas party given by one of Bill's wealthy patients (Sydney Pollack). At the party, Alice is sexually propositioned

by a smarmy Hungarian; Bill by a pair of anxious models. Both decline, but afterward end up arguing over it anyway. This crucial fight scene sets in motion the pieces of the chessboard Kubrick has been slyly setting up, as Bill makes one descent after another into an underworld of fear and desire (mostly fear).

Kubrick took a big chance with this movie, based on an obscure 1926 novella, *Traumnovelle* ("Dream Story") by Arthur Schnitzler; its episodes hang together less by the usual methods of classical unity than with dream-like motifs and recurring colors and turns of phrase. A variety of intriguing characters come into the picture; some return later and some don't. This rarely has worked in the movies before, and is the principal reason why novels of writers like Joyce or Pynchon are considered unfilmable. Yet Kubrick pulls it off with characteristic intelligence and aplomb, following the unraveling of Bill's trust in his surroundings while holding the audience in total suspense.

Often, this accomplishment owes to the film's formal brilliance, again showing that Kubrick considered music, style, lighting and sets just as crucial to telling a story as dialogue and action. The piano selection from György Ligeti, for example, is spare and creepi-

ly apt as Bill comprehends the evil around him. In the pivotal argument between the Harfords, the wide-angle close-up on Bill's face conveys all the astonishment and jealousy needed to carry the rest of the action forward. (The signature shot is reminiscent of earlier Kubrick close-ups that have captured, among other moments, Keir Dullea's shocked wonder in 2001: A *Space Odyssey* and Jack Nicholson's seething hatred in *The Shining*). Early on, red colors dominate, but when passion turns sour, blue takes over, soon giving way to a fearful and anxious purple. The developments are mesmerizing and almost subliminal.

The Dantean quality of *Eyes Wide Shut* necessarily conjures an almost medieval morality of sex—one I don't share, and that's O.K. The cultural politics of Kubrick never have been easily sorted out, probably for the better. Social conservatives have been annoyed by him ever since he artfully maneuvered an adaptation of Nabokov's *Lolita* around the censors in 1962, hammering the last nail in the coffin of Hollywood's '30s-era Production Code. (Alas, the bluenoses only mutated, and lived on to digitally tamper with a scene in *Eyes Wide Shut* that I won't talk about.) And after the classic Cold War satire *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* and the far-out 2001, he forever became a hero to the counterculture.

Cultural conservatives have been annoyed by Kubrick ever since he maneuvered *Lolita* around the censors.

Some unfairly have branded Kubrick a misogynist. But unlike, say, Hitchcock, whose films clearly held women in contempt, Kubrick merely narrated from a squarely male point of view: Even the feminist-aware *Eyes Wide Shut*, the most empathetic Kubrick has been toward the opposite sex since *Lolita*, revolves much more around Bill's fear than Alice's—and Bill's sexuality, too; just about everyone in the film, male or female,

lusts after him. This approach is honest. After all, what did Kubrick know about the interior worlds of women? How many lesser male moviemakers embarrass themselves by thinking they do?

Moreover, when talking about Kubrick, earthbound politics quickly pale next to his phenomenal contribution to 20th-century artistic life. If one must make a choice for the greatest auteur, why not Kubrick? He was as smart as Hitchcock or Welles, and displayed a wider range of subjects than both of them. He showed he could be more innovative than Truffaut or even Godard, and unlike Coppola, to whom he frequently was compared in the '70s, he didn't throw his talent away with regrettable train wrecks like *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. Even in the impact-on-popular-culture department, where one might argue Lucas or Spielberg has the edge, Kubrick was the guy who brought *Lolita* to the masses; whose *Dr. Strangelove* pumped up Cold War consciousness with "precious bodily fluids"; and whose *2001* paved the way for the mainstreaming of sci-fi, from *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters* to the flowering of the *Star Trek* franchise. (And, for all practical purposes, changed the name of Richard Strauss' "Also Sprach Zarathustra" to the "The Theme from *2001*.")

Even as an imperfect apprentice in his '20s, this ex-chess hustler from the Bronx made a shiny steel trap of a heist flick, *The Killing*, which is still imitated to this day. He also made the best film to date about World War I, *Paths of Glory*, about a French general who orders a pointlessly suicidal offensive. (The French government was so enchanted that it banned the film for 18 years.) The unsparing lack of sentimentality in both these movies would become a familiar characteristic of later Kubrick pictures and result in his reputation—unjustly earned—for misanthropy. Among other places recently, this was laboriously perpetuated in Stephen Holden's unfortunate obituary of Kubrick on the front page of the *New York Times*, which dwelled on his "bleak vision" and "pessimism," and tossed around words like "cold," "icy," "chilly" and "dark." Never mind that, to judge from almost all written accounts by his friends and associates, the director, however madly obsessive on

the set, was a rather warm and loving grandfather who could not bear human or animal suffering; who, despite his eccentric fear of flying and preference for his adopted country estate north of London, was only a recluse to reporters.

More importantly, the movies themselves are wrenchingly feeling, and not to notice it requires true coldness. Even his brutal films have a humanist spark not found in most romantic comedies: The ultraviolent kids in the notorious *A Clockwork Orange*, for example, are hardly likeable, yet its protagonist's failed, manipulated attempt at redemption is poignant, as is the story's arch satire of an unloving technocracy's experiments with mind control. The horror of *The Shining* and the sadism of *Full Metal Jacket* are difficult to take, even on repeated viewings—but this durability is testament to their strikingly real pathos. (By contrast, try watching *The Exorcist* more than once or twice, and you have, at best, good background for a campy theme party.)

Furthermore, only a hot-blooded savant could have successfully translated *Lolita* to the screen, where, somehow, the nymphet's rebuke of the monstrous pedophile is more heartbreaking than a thousand frankly-my-dears. And while the warmest character in *2001* happens to be a killer talking computer, that film's vast emotional depth relies less on traditional character development than on the sheer scope of its subject matter—several million years of human evolution—not to mention its lushly evocative musical sequences and triumphantly optimistic conclusion.

Kubrick was tough, sometimes really tough, but never so heartless as the everyday purveyors of schmaltz and false compassion. Their business, which really is cold and calculating, is booming more than ever in the '90s, from O.J. to Diana and now (again) to the Kennedys. That makes the loss of one of the movies' last great humanists all the more lamentable. ■

A Long, Strange Trip

By Doug Ireland

Thirty years ago, it was illegal for a bar in New York to serve a drink to a homosexual, so the handful of Manhattan gay bars were seedy, mob-run dives regularly raided by police who arrested the customers. In California, police routinely descended on gay gath-

ing places, and when same-sexers were arrested they were obliged to register with the state as sex offenders. It was a time, as Dudley Clendinen and Adam Nagourney write, when gay people "did not recognize themselves as a class of people, and the larger culture did not either. ... The census didn't count them, market surveys didn't seek them, political parties didn't court them. They had

no electoral power, no financial leverage, no legal recognition in their favor, no protection if someone discovered their secret and fired or evicted or blackmailed them for it."

We've come a long way, baby. Three decades after a riot against police brutality during a raid on the Stonewall Inn, a Greenwich Village bar, sparked the beginnings of the modern gay movement, two recently out-of-the-closet *New York Times* reporters have written "the story of the last great struggle for equal rights in American history."

Many younger gay people have a hard time grasping the all-pervasive and excruciating oppression that the expression of same-sex love provoked in those earlier days, and take for granted the ever-enlarging cultural and political space that gay people have fought for and created for themselves in the years since Stonewall. *Out for Good* is the first book that attempts to present a "comprehensive" history of "a fundamental change in national life and perspective"

Out for Good: The Struggle to Build a Gay Rights Movement in America

By Dudley Clendinen and Adam Nagourney
Simon and Schuster
682 pages, \$30

Craig Rodwell founded the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop as a gay liberation organizing tool in New York.

regarding gay people. Clendinen and Nagourney have performed a valuable service for all of those who weren't around during most of the past 30 years.

This book restores to their proper place in history many little-known civil rights activists, like New York's Craig Rodwell, who, even before Stonewall, founded the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village and organized the first—and very political—gay pride march a year after the riots; Dr. Franklin Kameny, the government scientist fired from his job during the massive anti-homosexual purges of the '50s, who fought for decades to end discrimination against gays in the public sector, and in 1971 became the first openly gay candidate for Congress (from Washington, D.C.); Morris Kight, who founded the Los Angeles Gay Liberation Front and the city's Gay Community Services Center in the early '70s; Barbara Love and Ivy Bottini, who led the fight against the purge of lesbians from the National Organization for Women (NOW) initiated in the '70s by Betty Friedan; and many more.

Out for Good highlights many of the movement's most widely known triumphs: the election of Harvey Milk as the first openly gay supervisor in San Francisco and the defeat of California's 1978 Briggs Initiative, which would have banned gay teachers from the schools; the founding of the organization that became the Human Rights Campaign and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force; and the ultimately successful effort to have gay civil rights included as a plank in the Democratic Party platform.

But the book also recounts many of the biggest tragedies and failures: the assassination of Milk and San Francisco Mayor George Moscone by a crazed anti-gay politician who received only a brief jail term; the poisonous 1979 "Save Our Children" campaign by Florida orange juice queen Anita Bryant that repealed Dade County's gay civil rights law and sparked the abrogation of similar statutes



KAY TABIN LAHUSEN

in other cities, while igniting a wave of anti-gay violence; and the long list of gay-bashings and murders that have punctuated the movement's history—and spurred its activism.

Much of the nascent movement's energy came from people who had come to political maturity on the left, through their participation in the struggles for black civil rights and against the Vietnam War. Indeed, it is unlikely that the gay movement would have taken off so quickly were it not for the example of the anti-racist campaigns of the '60s, which inspired so many same-sexers to question why they weren't also fighting for their own rights. *Out for Good*, however, does not shed enough light on the important role played in the fight against Jim

Many gays and lesbians learned organizing tactics from their experience fighting Jim Crow.

Crow by so many gay people, most of whom were at the time discreet about their sexual orientation.

The authors also have little patience for the important role of theory and intellectual work in the movement's development. For example, Dennis Altman's groundbreaking 1971 book, *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation*, written from a Marxist perspective, helped an entire generation of early gay activists break the confining chains of left-wing puritanism and internalized

homophobia and shatter the myth that same-sex love was a product of "capitalist decadence." But while the book is listed in Clendinen and Nagourney's bibliography, it is mentioned nowhere in the text.

The important theoretical contributions of foreign writer-activists like France's Guy Hocquenghem and Italy's Mario Mieli to developing a sophisticated gay politics here are also ignored, as is the role of magazines like Chuck Ortley's

Christopher Street and of courageous book editors like Michael Denny and Bill Whitehead—who got their publishing houses to issue some of the first gay-themed books—in creating a sense of identity and community among gay intellectuals. The ways in which the creation of a vibrant and interesting gay culture helped sustain and inform gay activism and aided same-sexers in breaking out of their isolation are likewise missing for the most part.

There always has been a tension in the gay movement between liberationist and assimilationist perspectives, and Clendinen and Nagourney clearly find the latter more congenial. Those early debates have continuing implications for today—as can be seen in the recent controversy over the Human Rights Campaign's "Faith and Families"-themed Millennium March on Washington in 2000, which doesn't even have the word "gay" in its name. But by truncating the attention they pay to theory, the authors often offer rather cartoon-like portrayals of these debates, when they're mentioned at all.

The book also focuses on a handful of large cities—New York, San Francisco, Minneapolis, Los Angeles and the nation's capital. A question that goes unexplored is why some big cities with large gay populations and thriving gay commercial cultures—like Chicago—have failed to produce a gay political movement with the same clout as those elsewhere. There is almost nothing here about the impact of the gay movement in middle- and small-sized cities and towns where same-sexers have registered dozens of important civil rights victories.

And there is little about the powerful institutional forces fighting to block the

legislation of gay civil rights, particularly the churches. For example, the Catholic Church was primarily responsible for keeping the New York City Council from bringing the gay civil rights bill to a vote for two decades; yet the opposition to full freedom for same-sexers is mostly portrayed here as the work of a few demagogues, and the crucial role of anti-homosexual crusading in building the religious right is insufficiently exposed.

Nor is there much in this book about the important role of campus-based activism, from the earliest days of the pioneering Gay Academic Union to the mushrooming of gay student groups and the creation of gay studies programs in colleges and universities across the country. The long struggle by gay activists in the labor movement is completely ignored.

Nonetheless, I knew many of the people portrayed in this book, and the warts-and-all portraits of the half-forgotten figures from the movement's early years are as accurate as those of better-known folks like the feisty author-activist Rita Mae Brown; Massachusetts Congressman Barney Frank, whose in-the-closet years as a gay rights supporter in the Massachusetts legislature are movingly described; and the irascible screenwriter/novelist Larry Kramer, whose writings played a crucial role in forcing a gay community in denial to confront the AIDS epidemic. Kramer also founded the first gay-run AIDS service group

(New York City's Gay Men's Health Crisis) and, crusading against complacency like a secular saint on acid, continues to provoke and irritate more staid homosexuals.

Perhaps unsurprisingly in a book written by four hands, *Out for Good* is uneven in its effectiveness. The best single chapter in the book recounts the campaign of belligerent confrontation—led by Frank Kameny and

***Out for Good* neglects labor- and campus-based gay activism, preferring the movement's insiders.**

the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Ron Gold—that persuaded the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality from its list of mental disorders in 1973, thus lifting the stigma of “sickness” and ending the legitimacy of commonplace tortures like electroshock and other futile “conversion therapies.” (There's an interesting irony in the fact that the son of Dr. Charles Socarides, the anti-gay psychiatrist who led the APA's “homosexuals must be cured” faction, is now the openly gay liaison to the same-sex community in Bill Clinton's White House.)

The authors decided to end their history in 1992 on the eve of Clinton's

election, when he promised a gay fundraising party in Hollywood, “I have a vision, and you're a part of it,” and pledged a major national effort to end AIDS. But Clinton, through a shrewd combination of patronage and symbolic gestures, has co-opted much of the gay political movement—while betraying it in substance, on everything from “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” to the Defense of Marriage Act and his refusal to carry out the recommendations even of George Bush's AIDS Council, let alone his own. None of this is taken up.

There is also a certain elitism in the book's view of the gay movement. The authors clearly are much more comfortable with and fascinated by the insiderish, Woodwardian detail of how mainstream politicians were recruited to support some gay civil rights measures. But insiders don't make change—outsiders do. An entire chapter is devoted to the funeral of influential Los Angeles gay fat cat Shelly Andelson and the roster of pols who showed up there, but the grassroots activism that made gay powerbrokers like Andelson possible is insufficiently recognized. Especially in the book's second half, one gets less sense of the movement's role in the lives of rank-and-file activists than of the infighting among organizational leaders. Nor can the authors conceal their disdain for the movement's more radical wing.

For all these caveats, *Out for Good* is a useful look by two talented reporters at some parts of the movement's development, especially for those who have little knowledge of it. But if journalism is the first draft of history, for a complete account we'll just have to wait for a second draft. ■

Doug Ireland is a former columnist for *The Village Voice*, *The New York Observer*, *New York* and the *Paris* daily *Libération*. He writes the political column for *POZ*, the national magazine for the HIV-positive community.

In October 1979, 100,000 people marched on Washington to dramatize the need for legislation guaranteeing the civil rights of homosexuals.



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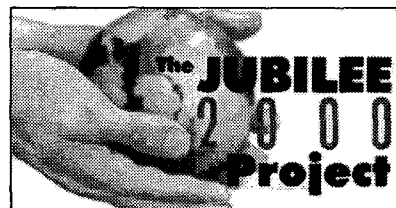


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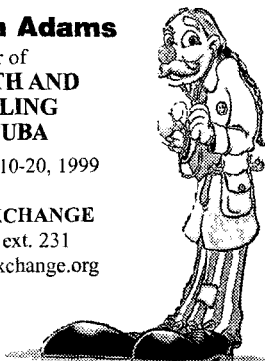
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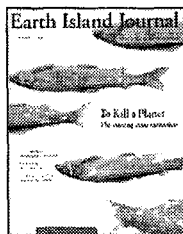
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can get alternative views produced in Hollywood.

It remains to be seen. We haven't done it yet. I'm not saying that it's impossible to do something good, and there have been examples of it, but not many. You can't give up on the major media, even though you know the chances of making something honest and strong aren't good. Sometimes a profit motive can work in your direction if the people who are financing you think they can make money from doing something controversial. We'll find out. We're only a little bit along in the process of this program. It will be interesting to see how far we can go.

It's interesting that Fox, the network that best symbolizes the tabloidization of television, is also the one that would produce a series based on your book.

Yeah. Fox produces all sorts of things, and the only thing that drives them is profit. *The Simpsons* has sort of a subversive character to it, but if it makes money, they will do it. Sometimes you have to figure out that if you want to get a serious message across, how you can actually take advantage of their desire to make a profit, and use that in order to get something important across in the media.

Have you had to deal with any issues of editorial control over this project?

Not yet. We're just in preproduction, putting together a treatment for the whole series. We are beginning to sign on some talent like Eddie Vedder of Pearl Jam and Winona Ryder. There will be some other very well known stars and directors.

Is it difficult to tell a good story and get all the facts in at the same time?

Oh sure, it's a very tough problem, and sometimes you have to sacrifice information in order to concentrate on one thing and dramatize it. You have to leave out a lot, because if you try to get too much in, you lose the focus, you lose the drama, you lose the people's interest. Besides, all history is a small selection of an enormous amount of data, and that's even true when you write a book like mine, a 650-page book—it's still only a small selection of information. And if you are going to do a television series based on that, or a movie, you have to select an even smaller amount. So you are sacrificing, very often, quantity for quality, information for drama. Then you have to decide when you dramatize something, what liberties you are going to take with the facts in order to make things more dramatic.

He's Back

Howard Zinn's latest book, a dramatic monologue called *Marx in Soho* (South End Press, \$12), is tiny, a mere 55 pages. But it packs a punch that far outweighs its brevity. In *Soho*, Zinn assumes the persona of a freshly resurrected Karl Marx, literally challenging the idea that his thought is dead.

The opinionated Karl drinks his way through a good six-pack or so, sharing his life with his audience. He offers trenchant comments on contemporary headlines, reminisces about his life with his family in Germany, Paris and London, sputters about the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, and generally sheds light both on the world around us and the human being behind the Marxian myth. Marx's wife, "Red" Jenny, is a key player, and Zinn uses her as a foil to Marx's ideas, trying to drag him from his intellectual heights to the mundane world of the everyday: "Forget your intellectual readers," she tells her husband, "Address the workers."

It's in the deft stroke of the pen where Zinn really soars. Whether describing Marx's loathing of "Marxists," explaining the labor theory of value, denouncing the evils of Stalinism and today's capitalism, or in the rhapsodic description of the Paris Commune of 1871, Zinn is concise and convincing.

One area where he falls curiously and considerably short, however, is in his description of Marx's relationship with Bakunin and anarchism. While Bakunin makes a bleary-eyed and entirely barbarian appearance in these pages, his ideas are never truly confronted. Why not? Given Zinn's apparent predilection for a kind of fusion of the two, one wonders why the great Russian anarchist appears more as a caricature than as a serious challenge.

But this is still a wonderful little book: concise, humane, witty and illuminating. *Marx in Soho* makes an entertaining introduction to a complex body of ideas for just about anyone. Jenny would have approved.

Chris Faatz

Oliver Stone, for example, has been accused of using some poetic license in his historical treatments.

He went quite far with JFK in the direction of moving away from history into speculation. I suppose it was based on what he thought were facts that he believed about the conspiracy to assassinate the president. I think he would have been doing better not to go that far. On the other hand, he made the film *Salvador*. Sure, he invented the story. The characters you might say were invented, but on the other hand, the experiences they went through were the real experiences of people in El Salvador. So it's possible to fictionalize something and yet use that fictionalized character with a fictionalized incident to point to a real truth, and to dramatize that truth more vividly than if you told it as nonfiction. ■

Antonio López is a staff arts writer for *The New Mexican*, a Santa Fe daily. He also has written for *High Times*, *Tricycle* and *Punk Planet*.

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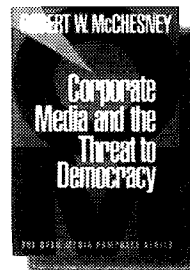
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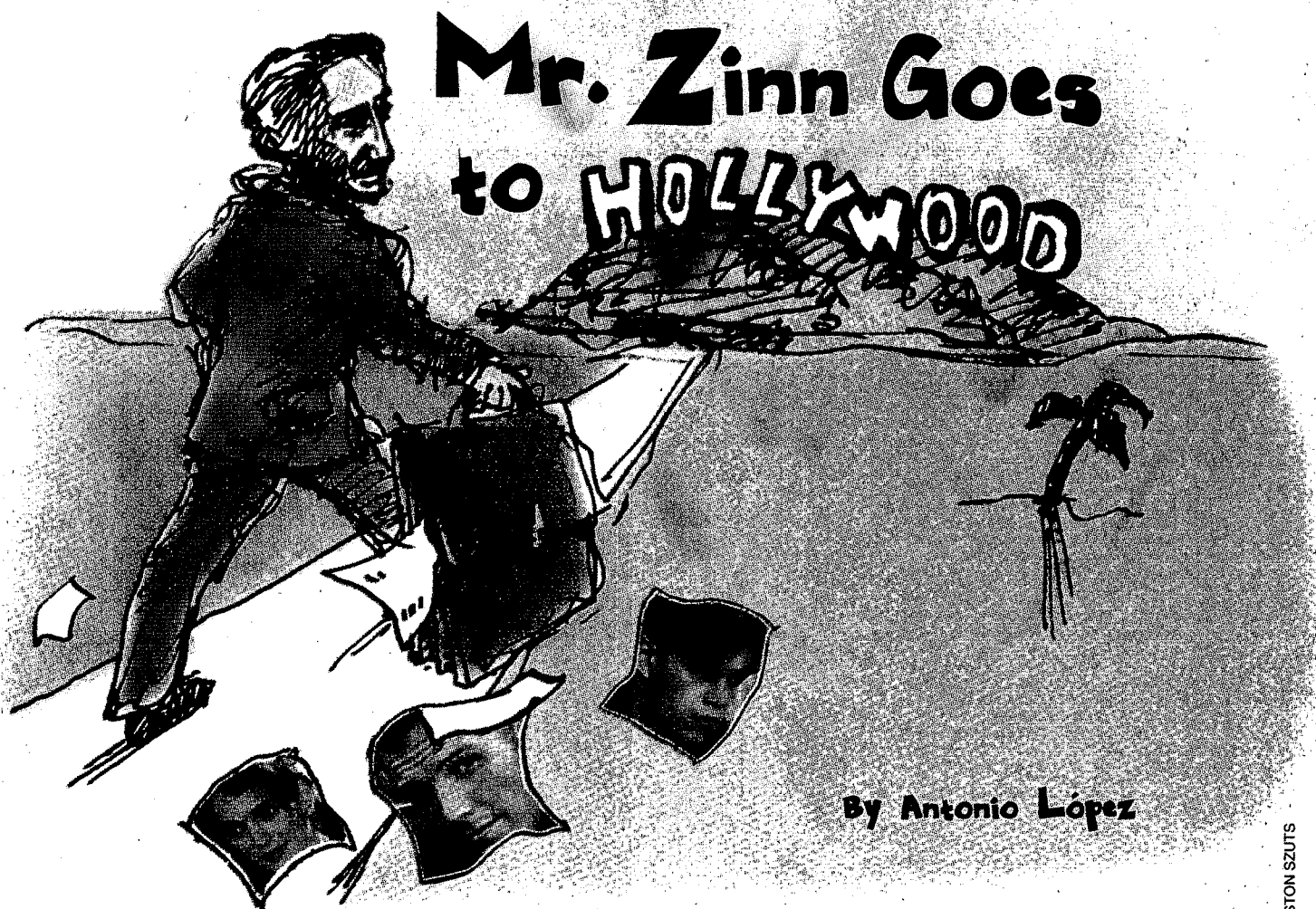
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AGOSTON SZUTS

Popular historian Howard Zinn needs little introduction. The big news is that Zinn, together with stars Matt Damon and Ben Affleck, is in preproduction with Fox for a miniseries based on his book, *A People's History of the United States*. Zinn recently was keynote speaker at the Taos Talking Picture Festival in New Mexico, where *In These Times* spoke with him about his project and Hollywood in general.

What is your reaction to the claim that Hollywood promotes liberal causes?

There are people in Hollywood who are personally active in various political causes. That's one thing, but bringing the political causes to the screen, that's another matter. Hollywood actors can participate at an event and make a speech here and there, give money or give a name to a good cause, but if a Hollywood actor tries to raise \$50 million to make a movie for a cause that's too far to the left, he or she is not going to be able to do it. Very rarely is there a breakthrough. Warren Beatty made the

film *Reds* (1981), in which the hero of the film is an American communist (John Reed)—but it helped that it was long ago and he's dead. Try to make a film today in which the film's hero is an anti-war protester against Vietnam, or if the hero is somebody who is organizing the workers. ... Has a film been made about the United Farm Workers and their struggles? Cesar Chavez, even though he was a complex character, was still a heroic figure.

What other historical topics do you think Hollywood has ignored?

If you look at all the westerns—you know, cowboys versus Indians—you won't see the labor struggles that took place out in the far West. But some of the most bitter and most dramatic labor struggles in American history happened during this time, like the Colorado coal strike of 1913-1914, which culminated in the Ludlow Massacre. That's not taught in schools, it doesn't appear in the textbooks and it certainly doesn't appear on movie screens.

But you have 11,000 miners and their families going out on strike against Rockefeller-owned coal mines in 1913, and Mother Jones comes down to help them organize. It culminates in a very terrible moment when the National Guard, which is on the payroll of Rockefeller, attacks a tent colony where the miners and their families live, sets fire to the tent colony after pouring machine gun fire into the tents—and then they find the bodies of 11 children and two women burned to death by the fire. You would think that would be a natural topic for a movie, but Hollywood does not want to touch labor struggles because, after all, Hollywood is dominated by big corporations and they don't like to see class conflict presented on the screen in such a way as to make the owners and industries look rather vicious and evil.

Since you are producing this miniseries on Fox based on A People's History, some might argue that you

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